



Throwing Injuries of the Elbow



Overview

Throwing overhand again and again puts a lot of stress on your elbow. It can lead to injury. Young athletes, in particular, are at risk. Some play sports all year without learning how to throw properly. And, their bones are still growing. Let's look at how the elbow can be damaged.

Soft Tissue Injury

In many cases, overhand throwing affects the inner side of your elbow. Bands of tissue called "ligaments" (which hold bones together) can be stretched or torn. So can tendons. These are bands of tissue that anchor your muscles to your bones. You may feel pain at the bony bump in the inner side of the elbow. This bump is called the "medial epicondyle."

Bone Injury

Three bones come together at the elbow, and the ends of these bones are lined with cartilage. Repetitive throwing can cause these bones to bang or rub together. The cartilage can wear away. Bumps called "bone spurs" then grow where the bone is irritated. Sometimes small fractures develop in your bones. Young people have what is known as "growth plates" near the ends of their bones. Damaged growth plates make it hard for the bones to grow properly.

Nerve Injury

Overhand throwing can also cause nerve problems. The ulnar nerve travels along the inner side of your elbow. Throwing can stretch and irritate this nerve.

Symptoms

If you have a throwing injury, you may feel pain in your elbow when you throw. Often, this pain is on the elbow's inner side. You may not be able to throw as hard or as far. You may have numbness or tingling in your elbow, arm or hand.

Treatment

Treatment depends on your particular injury and your needs. In many cases, a throwing injury can be treated without surgery. Your healthcare provider can create a care plan that is right for your needs.