

# Triceps Tendon Tear

Triceps tendon tears are injuries that occur to the triceps tendon in the back part of the elbow. Most of the time, the injury occurs from a forced bending in the elbow due to a pushing activity that causes the triceps attachment to end up separating from the bone itself. Normal triceps tendons are firmly attached to the bone. They are responsible for straightening the elbow and strength. When the tendon tear occurs, it detaches and the muscle isn't able to pull on the bone, which in turn, causes weakness and difficulty extending the elbow.

A triceps tendon tear may be classified as three grades... Grade I – a strain in the tendon, Grade II – a small tear in the tendon, and Grade III – a rupture to the tendon. Grades II and III can be problematic.

## Triceps Tendon Tear Anatomy

The triceps are one of the major muscles within the upper part of the arm in the human body. They run along the humerus, which is the main bone within the upper arm, between the elbow and the shoulder. Along with the bicep muscles, they provide you with retraction and extension in the forearm. Whenever the triceps are tensed, the forearm will extend and the elbow will straighten. If the triceps are relaxed and the biceps are tense, the elbow will bend and the forearm will retract.

The triceps muscle has three heads (tendons at the top part of the muscle) and one insertion into the elbow. Any of these tendons could tear. A full rupture is very rare.

## How to Treat a Triceps Tendon Tear:

### 1. Surgical Repair

In the majority of cases, patients won't notice any loss in their shoulder function after the tear has occurred, although functioning in the elbow is dramatically affected. A space on the back part of the elbow where the tendon normally is can be felt. Some cramping in the retracted muscle and even a slight bulge in the arm are other common symptoms. Surgical repair is often required to prevent elbow weakness. In partial tears, non-operative treatment might be used. Complete tears require surgical repair within four weeks of the injury occurring.

In surgical repair, the tendon is reattached to the bone using drill holes or a bone anchor. After the surgery is completed, the elbow is put into a splint to help protect it for a short amount of time, often one to two weeks. It is followed up using a removable brace, for about six to eight weeks, which will allow the elbow to bend. Physical therapy is often recommended about four to six weeks after surgery with a full return to sports and activities about four to six months following the surgery.

## Tips:

- Work with a manual therapist to ensure a smooth recovery.
- Make sure to return to activity slowly and don't overdo it or you can injure the site worse.
- When lifting weights, only do what your body can handle. Don't overdo it.
- Applying ice to the injured site can help with pain and inflammation following the injury.
- An anti-inflammatory medication to help to address the swelling and pain in the injured site.