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### Natural help for tendonitis

It's springtime, and people are getting outside, doing gardening, yard work, hiking, kayaking and other sports. While it's great to get out there, sometimes people tend to overdo it – often after being relatively inactive all winter or not warming up properly. All that raking, snipping, shovelling, mowing and paddling can lead to tendonitis. Whether it's repetitive strain, or due to a sudden injury, tendonitis can put a serious wrench in our outdoor activities, and can make daily tasks excruciating.

Tendonitis is the inflammation of a tendon, the band of strong fibrous tissue that links muscle to bone. With repetitive movements or injury, it can develop microscopic tears, which leads to inflammation and stiffness and pain around a joint, especially with movement. It can also cause numbness or tingling, and range of motion may be restricted. While it's advisable to refrain from doing activities that flare it up, this is not always possible – you can't just stop using your arms, for example, or quit your job! For this reason, the site can keep getting reinjured, and the injury can take a long time to heal. As well, there is very little blood flow to tendons, which further impedes healing. If not resolved, tendonitis can become chronic, where the tendon fibres degenerate and weaken. At this stage, the condition is referred to as Tendinosis. The most common sites for tendon issues are the elbows (tennis or golfer's elbow), the shoulders (where it can develop into frozen shoulder), the wrists (with carpal tunnel being an associated syndrome), and the heel (Achilles tendonitis).

Acupuncture excels at treating tendon issues whatever the location, and can reduce pain and inflammation, drastically reducing healing time. Acupuncture works by increasing the flow of Qi (bioenergy) and blood to the area, increasing the body's healing ability. Waste products are carried away, and new, oxygenated blood is brought in, helping the tissue to recover. Acute cases can sometimes be resolved in a few treatments, while chronic cases tend to take longer.

Extremely fine, sterile needles are placed painlessly at or near the site of injury, as well as at distal points to increase the flow of qi and blood in the associated meridians (energy pathways). As well, other points may be chosen to loosen surrounding muscles, which are generally tense and tight. Other points are chosen on various parts of the body to support the body's healing systemically. For example, the Liver (in Chinese medicine, this refers to the energetic system, not just the organ itself) controls and moistens the tendons and ligaments, and helps with ease of movement and flexibility, both physical and emotional. For this reason, points are often chosen on the Liver meridian to support its healthy function and to nourish and strengthen all the tendons and ligaments in the body.

During the first session, each client is given a thorough diagnosis. A series of questions regarding physical and emotional functions, as well as a pulse and tongue diagnosis can help to determine organ systems and meridians involved, as well as weaknesses or blockages that may be contributing to the problem. This will determine how the client is treated. Ten clients with tennis elbow will each be treated slightly differently, according to their individual diagnoses.

Many of my clients have reported that not only has their tendonitis improved with acupuncture, but their sleep is also better, they have more energy and they're more calm and in touch with their bodies. When all systems are balanced and energy is flowing freely, we are happier, stronger, more resilient, and less prone to injury (And current injuries resolve more quickly!) Enjoy your time outside!

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