

# **Injuries and Pain**

**By**

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We've all experienced it at one time or another. Pain in the elbow, a tender shoulder joints that aches so bad you can't rotate your arms. Knees that hurt so bad you can't straighten the leg out. Hips, ankles, wrists, neck and every other joint in the body... not to mention the muscles: like the pecs, forearms, quads, triceps, biceps, that become so sore just moving takes an extraordinary amount of courage. Some would say, "suck it up and go on." I did, all throughout my youth. It's now time for me to pay for those years of youthful indiscretions and believe me, pay I have and am. Joint and muscle pain is a part of weightlifting and bodybuilding. It's part of participation in any and every other sport as well. You have to learn to accept some of it - learn how to deal with it - and how to work around it.

When it comes to bodybuilding you can do three things, take a long extended break from your training, which I would not advise. You can continue to train and suffer like crazy all the while making your situation worse, again, something I would not advise. You can train using exercises and movements to bring about healing. That's about it, all you can do. The wise will do the latter and the majority will do the other two.

Let me explain the reason for this article. While working out at a local gym an old acquaintance was telling me about an elbow problem he was having. It was the same thing I have been dealing with for the past four months. Ironically we each had the same condition and it was presenting the same problem. While we were discussing the subject another "bystander" was listening in and said he had the very same problem. Mine, his, and his problem is this. Almost all pressing movements and absolutely every extension

movement is impossible to perform due to pain in the elbow region. No matter how light a weight used, the pain is so great it makes the movement impossible to perform.

Over the years I've never been one who could perform heavy dumbbell triceps extensions. I've seen some guys do them with 70 pound, 80 pound and heavier dumbbells. Not me, not ever. Even in the best shape of my life I could never use more than 50 pounders and then it would still kill my elbows - just not built for it. Lying barbell or EZ curl extensions were more like it if I was going to perform extensions. Even those however, could be felt in the elbows and I always had to pack ice on 'em after a workout.

As the three of us were discussing our problem another person joined in to let us know he is experiencing the same problem. After a few minutes another huddled around. In about twenty minutes there was a nice group of ten standing around in the middle of the gym exchanging stories of elbow pain from doing extensions. I suggested we might be better off moving off the gym floor to discuss the topic rather than having people walk around us. After all, I hate it when people get the gym and either just hang around the equipment or block a walking path, I sure didn't want to be one of the ones I've preached against all these years.

Asked how my problem began and what I do about it I began to take everyone back in time... way back in time to the days of my "The Carport" days ("The Carport is an article I wrote and is listed in the Article Section of my website, [www.palmieribodybuilding.com](http://www.palmieribodybuilding.com)). It was in the very beginning that I incurred some injuries while working out. Young and determined I was able to train through them. I wasn't smart or experienced enough to know I should train around them so I just "sucked it up" and went on training. Today, years later I am paying the price for doing so. Instead of listing all the foolish things I did I want to concentrate on the one we were talking about, the elbows and triceps extensions.

Early on I tried to lift as heavy as I could and paid little attention to my technique. Like most energetic beginners, my enthusiasm was stronger than my knowledge and certainly stronger than my ability to lift correctly. I constantly pushed to use heavier and heavier weights regardless of my ability to handle the weight. The first encounter I had with elbow pain came while I was performing dumbbell triceps extensions. I was using the heaviest dumbbell I could use, it might have only been 20 or 25 pounds back then but remember, it was in my beginning and in the early days that was heavy for me. I remember feeling great pain in my elbow region, still I continued on. I completed my workout and as the evening went on the pain grew worse and worse. By bedtime it was so bad I couldn't sleep.

No matter how bad the pain was, and it was bad, I continued to train like a madman. I worked out until I could hardly extend my lower arm. After a few weeks of such training I had to discontinue working out altogether. I simply could not perform movements. I had to take almost a full year off to let my elbows heal.

Over the years extensions proved to be a worthy opponent. On the one hand they produce results and on the other hand they produce pain and discomfort. After years of battling with extensions I found no matter what I do or how I do it I am susceptible to elbow problems from extensions. I learned a valuable lesson from my elbow problems. The lesson I learned is don't quite and don't be foolish. Don't keep going like a bull in a china shop and don't stop training. *What you need to do is train to repair and heal, forget training for additional size and strength.*

Training for this purpose brings about many rewards and progress. It's simply a matter of adjustment, not falling behind. It affords time for specialization, experimentation, recuperation, and understanding of your body. Instead of feeling like a set back I now see injuries as a way to become better and more fulfilled. Sounds corny I know but it works. It also gives time for egos to regain reality, and that is important.

Okay so what do I do when my elbows cannot perform extensions, or push downs? I learned the hard way what works best for me is this. I stay away from any movement that causes great pain. After some experimenting I discovered what movements killed my elbows and caused the most pain when working triceps, they were: barbell - EZ bar - dumbbell triceps extensions, push downs, dips, flat barbell bench press, incline barbell bench press, cable extensions, and just about any other movement that can be classified as an extension including almost all pressing movements.

I learned only two triceps movements allowed me to work the muscles without continuing to aggravate my elbows. Dumbbell kickbacks and very light weight medium grip bench pressing with my elbows held in close to my sides. If I allow my elbows to venture outward I feel terrific pain in them. That's it and I have to be especially careful on the medium grip benching as moving my hands in too close or out too far would get my elbows but fast.

I also learned to perform kickbacks first in my workout. I will go as heavy as I can on these and I will do them standing in a bent over position, lying flat on my stomach, on my side, inclined, declined, and any other way I could do them. Since basically it is the only movement I can do when my elbows are acting up. I had to experiment and discovered kickbacks helped me work through the injury and pain. No, it does not do much in the quest to add size but it sure does a lot to add shape and a different dimension to the arms. With the flat medium grip bench press, as mentioned, I had to use a light weight but performed right after kickbacks, light weight becomes heavy pretty fast.

Little by little I discover I can add heavier medium grip bench presses. Modified dips are the next movement I can add in, with time. Medium grip triceps press downs are next. Each step is with light weights and my focus is on working through the situation not trying to continue to add size or strength. It takes time, sometimes months, but patience and persistence pays off. Eventually I have always been able to return to extensions and other heavy triceps work but it takes time.

I also discovered when my elbows were causing problems chins and bent over rows hurt. Not to the same extent as say extensions would but none the less I can feel pain while performing those movements. Naturally I am careful what movements I do. Like I said earlier pressing movements are basically out except for incline dumbbell presses. For whatever reason, I am able to perform them if I cock my wrists so that my index finger and thumb were at a downward angle.

It's frustrating and depending on the stage of training one is in it can be almost enough to make a person blow a fuse. Backing off is not letting up. Seeking alternative exercises to work a muscle without further aggravating an injury is the smart thing. Attempting to train in a pain zone or through it will not allow you to progress no matter what you think. It may make you feel like you're "macho" but in truth you're doing something pretty dumb.

Elbows bothering you? Take one to two weeks off. Experiment and find exercises that can be performed that do not place severe stress on your elbows. If you've damaged them bad enough almost anything will cause some pain. Remember there is a difference between pain and discomfort. Use light weights, adjust hand and body positions to accommodate your situation and *WORK OUT TO REPAIR AND HEAL YOUR INJURY*, not to make it worse, not to add size, not to increase strength. Once again a little common sense and care will go a long way.

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