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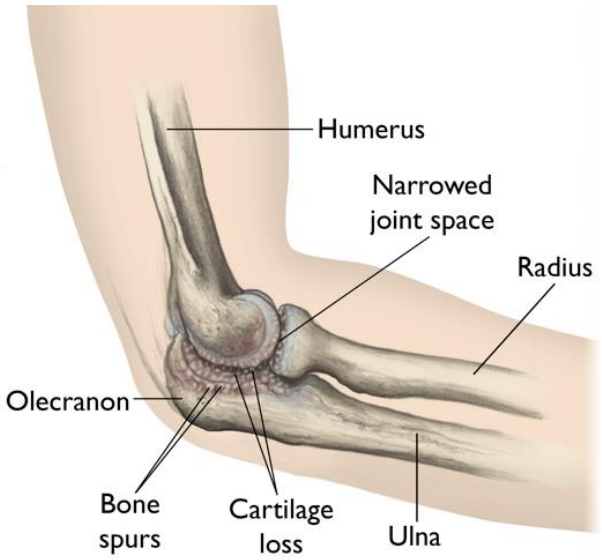
## ELBOW ARTHRITIS

This leaflet provides general information to help you understand Elbow Arthritis and the available treatment options.

**Not everyone with elbow arthritis needs surgery.**

At the heart of my practice is **Shared Decision-Making**. Whether we pursue conservative management (Plan A) or surgical intervention (Plan B), the goal is to create a tailored treatment plan that aligns with your lifestyle, values, and functional goals.




*This leaflet provides general information and does not replace individual medical advice.*


**Practice Locations**

- **LIPS Healthcare London**
- **Spire Alexandra Hospital Chatham**
- **Practice Plus Group Gillingham**

**Private Practice Manager**

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More Info

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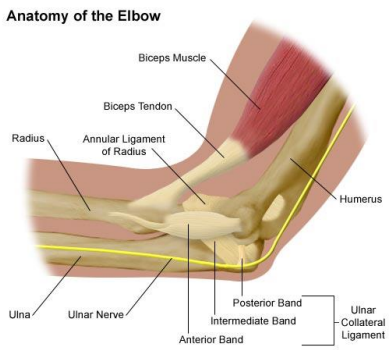
# Anatomy of the Elbow

The elbow is a hinged joint connecting the upper arm to the forearm, relying on several structures for stability and movement:

### How the Elbow Works

The joint connects:

- **Humerus** – upper arm bone
- **Radius and Ulna** – forearm bones




### Stability

Maintained by the shape of the bones and collateral ligaments on each side.

### Nerve Considerations

- **The ulnar nerve** runs behind the inner elbow (medial epicondyle).
- **Bone spurs (osteophytes)** can compress this nerve, causing numbness, tingling, or weakness in the ring and little fingers.

# Causes of Elbow Arthritis

### Osteoarthritis (OA)

*"Wear-and-tear" arthritis*

- Cartilage lining the bones becomes frayed and thin
- Bone surfaces rub together, causing pain
- Most common in people over 50 years of age

### Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)

*An autoimmune condition*

- Causes swelling of the joint lining
- Leads to pain and stiffness in multiple joints

### Post-Traumatic Arthritis (PTA)

- Develops after elbow injury or fracture
- Cartilage damage can lead to arthritis over time

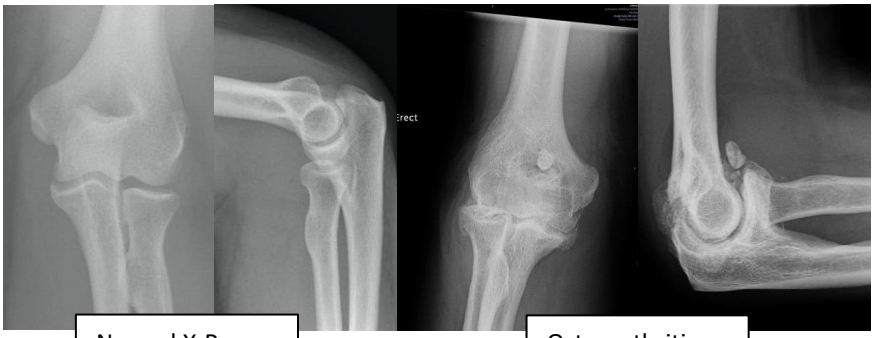
### Common Symptoms

- **Pain:** especially when lifting or using the arm; may radiate down the forearm.
- **Night Pain:** common as arthritis progresses.
- **Clicking, locking, or clunking:** may occur with elbow movement.
- **Stiffness:** can limit everyday activities (dressing, cooking, hygiene).
- **Numbness and tingling:** usually in the ring and little fingers due to ulnar nerve compression.

### Diagnosis

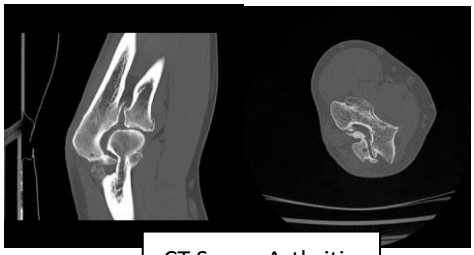
- Physical examination and patient history
- **X-rays:** show cartilage loss, bone spurs, or joint changes.
- **Nerve Conduction Studies (NCS):** used if ulnar nerve compression is suspected.
- **CT scan:** sometimes used to evaluate joint damage or loose bodies before surgery.

*Example imaging:*



Normal X-Ray

Osteoarthritis



CT Scan - Arthritis

## *Treatment Options: A Shared Decision*

I will discuss all available treatment options with you, explaining the benefits and risks of each. Your preferences, values, and lifestyle will be considered as we work together to create a treatment plan best suited to your needs — this shared decision-making process ensures you are fully informed and involved in your care.

### *Plan A — Non-Surgical*

- **Medications:** pain relievers and NSAIDs to reduce discomfort.
- **Physical Therapy:** exercises to maintain movement, strength, and function.
- **Corticosteroid Injections:** temporary relief of pain and inflammation.
- **PRP:** an experimental therapy using your own blood to aid healing.
- **Viscosupplementation:** hyaluronic acid injections to improve joint lubrication.

### *Plan B — Surgical*

- **Elbow Arthroscopy:** keyhole surgery suitable for younger or active patients – smooths joint surfaces, removes loose bodies, and releases tight tissue, though improvement is usually temporary.
- **Elbow Replacement:** recommended when joint surfaces are completely worn – restores movement and reduces pain.

### *Important Things to Remember*

- Elbow arthritis is not dangerous
- Many people improve without surgery
- Surgery is optional
- Doing nothing is always an option

### *Questions You May Wish to Ask*

- What treatments should I try first?
- How long should I try them for?
- What improvement can I expect?
- What happens if I choose not to have surgery?

### *Book or Enquire Directly at Each Site*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
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