

# Little League Elbow

Little League Elbow is a condition caused by repetitive stress to the inside (medial) part of the elbow from overhand throwing. It primarily affects young athletes whose growth plates are still open.

## Common Symptoms

- Pain on the inner elbow during or after throwing
- Decreased throwing velocity or control
- Swelling or tenderness

## 1. Understanding the Cause

- Repetitive throwing, especially curveballs/sliders at a young age
- High pitch counts, lack of rest
- Poor throwing mechanics

## 2. Prevention Tips

- Follow pitch count guidelines (e.g., from Little League Baseball or Pitch Smart)
- Time off: recommend 3–4 months off throwing
- Focus on proper mechanics with a coach or physical therapist
- Warm up properly and cool down after activity

- Avoid throwing through pain

### **3. Return to Play Criteria**

- Pain-free range of motion
- Full strength and endurance
- Normal throwing mechanics
- Gradual throwing program completed without symptoms

**Exercises are most effective when guided by a qualified professional, such as a physiotherapist, athletic therapist, or strength and conditioning coach. If you have any concerns, it's always a good idea to consult with an expert.**

## Phase 1: Acute Phase (0-2 weeks)

**Goals:** Reduce pain/inflammation, protect elbow, maintain motion

**Interventions:**

- Complete rest from throwing
- Ice 15–20 min, 2–3x/day
- Compression and elevation
- Gentle elbow ROM (flexion/extension, pronation/supination)
- Shoulder isometrics
- Scapular retraction squeezes
- Light cardio (e.g., walking, cycling)

**Criteria to progress to Phase 2:**

- Pain-free at rest
- Pain-free full range of motion at elbow and shoulder
- Tolerates light isometric shoulder exercises without increased symptoms

### 1. Elbow Extension Stretch

**Sets:** 3 | **Hold:** 30-45 sec | **Frequency:** 2x/day

**Preparation:**

- Sit with upper arm supported on a table
- Grasp affected forearm with unaffected hand

**Execution:**

- Gently straighten the elbow
- Apply a gentle pressure downwards to further straighten the elbow



Arm supported on table,  
grasp forearm



Straighten elbow, gentle  
pressure downward, hold

### 2. Elbow Flexion | Over-pressure at EOR

**Sets:** 3 | **Hold:** 30-45 sec | **Frequency:** 2x/day

**Execution:**

- Bend elbow up
- Bend your arm further with opposite hand



Elbow straight



Elbow bent



Gentle pressure,  
hold

### 3. Forearm Supination PROM with Overpressure

Sets: 3 | Hold: 30-45 sec | Frequency: 2x/day

#### Preparation:

- Position your forearm on a counter or table

#### Execution:

- Turn your forearm so that your palm is facing up
- Apply overpressure with your other hand



Turn palm up, apply overpressure

### 4. Forearm Pronation Isometric

Sets: 3 | Hold: 30-45 sec | Frequency: 2x/day

#### Preparation:

- Sit or stand with good posture
- Bend your elbow to 90 degrees, palm up

#### Execution:

- Grasp your wrist with your other hand
- Try to turn your palm over, resisting with your other hand
- There should be no movement



Palm up, resist turning palm down

### 5. Scapular Retraction

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10-15 | Frequency: 2x/day

#### Preparation:

- Sit or stand with good posture
- May be helpful to stand against a wall to feel the movement

#### Execution:

- Use the muscles between your shoulder blades to pull them together and slightly downward
- Be sure not to pull them together using your trapezius muscles (headache muscles)
- Relax and repeat



Stand tall with shoulders relaxed



Use muscles to squeeze your shoulder blades together and slightly downward; Head stays still

## 6. Shoulder Abduction Isometric | Elbow Extended

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10-15 | Frequency: daily

### Preparation:

- Stand with good posture next to a wall or doorframe, arm by your side

### Execution:

- Push hand outward against the wall, keeping your arm straight



Push hand against wall

## 7. Shoulder External Rotation Isometric

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10-15 | Frequency: daily

### Preparation:

- Stand with good posture facing a wall or doorframe
- Hold your arm by your side, elbow at 90 degrees, palm facing away from wall or doorframe

### Execution:

- Rotate your hand outwards into the wall or doorframe
- Keep your elbow at your side



Rotate hand outward into doorframe

## 8. Shoulder Internal Rotation Isometric

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10-15 | Frequency: daily

### Preparation:

- Stand with good posture facing a wall or doorframe
- Hold your arm by your side, elbow at 90 degrees, palm facing wall or doorframe

### Execution:

- Rotate your hand inwards into the wall or doorframe
- Keep your elbow at your side



Rotate hand into doorframe

## 9. Cycling Stationary Bike

**Duration:** 20-45 minutes | **Frequency:** 3-4x per week

Cycling Stationary Bike



Cycling Stationary Bike

## Phase 2: Recovery Phase (2-6 weeks)

**Goals:** Restore ROM, begin light strengthening

**Interventions:**

- Continue gentle elbow stretching from Phase 1
- Begin isotonic strengthening:
  - Wrist flexion/extension
  - Forearm pronation/supination
  - Biceps curls
- Theraband rotator cuff exercises (IR/ER at side)
- Scapular stabilizers (wall slides, rows)
- Core stability (planks, bridges)
- Posture exercises

**Criteria to progress to Phase 3:**

- No pain during or after exercises
- Full, pain-free range of motion
- Strength at least 4/5 in shoulder and forearm muscles
- No tenderness over medial elbow

### 1. Wrist Flexion Concentric (Band)

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10-15 | Frequency: 3-4x/week

**Preparation:**

- Hold band in hand.
- Hang wrist over edge of table, palm up.

**Execution:**

- Curl wrist toward ceiling. Do not lift forearm off table.
- Relax wrist back down.

**Tip:**

- As wrist relaxes, let weight roll toward tips of fingers, feeling for an increased stretch in your palm.



Hold tubing



Curl wrist toward ceiling

### 2. Wrist Extension Concentric (Band)

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10-15 | Frequency: 3-4x/week

**Preparation:**

- Hold a band in your hand.
- Hang wrist over edge of table, palm down.

**Execution:**

- Bend wrist up toward ceiling. Do not lift forearm off table.
- Relax wrist back down.



Hold tubing



Extend wrist

### 3. Forearm Pronation + Supination Concentric (Dumbbell)

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10-15 | Frequency: 3-4x/week

#### Preparation:

- Sit with good posture
- Position your forearm on a support surface with palm toward ceiling

#### Execution:

- Turn your wrist over so that your palm faces the floor
- Return to the start position in a controlled manner



Start Position



Turn your palm to the floor

### 4. Elbow Flexion Concentric | Pronation to Supination (Band)

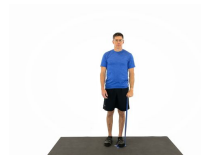
Sets: 3 | Reps: 10-15 | Frequency: 3-4x/week

#### Preparation:

- Sit or stand with your arm at your side, palm down
- Hold a band in your hand, the other end under your foot

#### Execution:

- Bend your elbow, bringing hand toward shoulder, turning your palm up
- Return to start position turning your palm back down



Start Position - Palm down



Bend your elbow turning your palm up



Continue to bend your elbow with your palm up

### 5. Shoulder External Rotation Concentric | Neutral (Band)

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10-15 | Frequency: 3-4x/week

#### Preparation:

- Standing, elbow at 90 degrees
- Tuck a folded towel between your body and your elbow

#### Execution:

- Gently pull shoulder blades together
- Keeping elbow close to body, slowly rotate hand outward
- Return to start position



Start Position



Rotate hand outward



## 6. Shoulder Internal Rotation Concentric - Neutral (Band)

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10-15 | Frequency: 3-4x/week

### Preparation:

- Stand with good posture
- Tuck a folded towel between your body and your elbow as shown

### Execution:

- Keeping elbow close to body, rotate hand inward, toward your stomach
- Return to start position



Start Position



Rotate hand inward

## 7. Shoulder Slides (Wall)

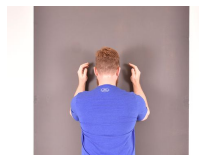
Sets: 3 | Reps: 10 | Frequency: 3-4x/week

### Preparation:

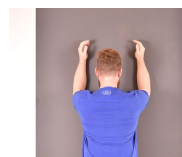
- Stand with both arms on the wall as shown

### Execution:

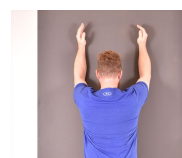
- Slide forearms up the wall
- Return to the start position



Start Position



Slide forearms up the wall



## 8. Row (Band)

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10-15 | Frequency: 3-4x/week

### Preparation:

- Sit with good posture, holding a band with your arm straight out in front of you

### Execution:

- Row arm to your side with elbow bent
- Squeeze shoulder blades down and back
- Return to start position
- Keep your shoulders down and avoid arching your back



Start position



Pull arm to your side with elbow bent

## 9. Scapular Retraction

Sets: 3 | Reps: 10-15 | Frequency: daily

### Preparation:

- Stand tall, shoulders relaxed

### Execution:

- Pull shoulder blades back and down
- Don't hunch your shoulders



Shoulders relaxed



Pull shoulder blades back and down

## 10. Front Plank | Hands and Feet

Sets: 3 | Hold: 30-60 sec | Frequency: 3-4x/week

### Execution:

- Plank on hands and feet
- Hold



Hold plank

## Phase 3: Strengthening Phase (6-10 weeks)

**Goals:** Improve arm strength, endurance, and stability

**Interventions:**

- Progress resistance and volume of previous exercises and **continue Elbow stretches from Phase 1**
- Add:
  - Shoulder Y-T-Ws
  - Closed chain exercises (modified push-ups, wall push-ups)
  - Light plyometrics (medicine ball taps, rebounds)
- Continue core and posture work
- Cardiovascular endurance (bike, elliptical, running)

**Criteria to progress to Phase 4:**

- No pain with resisted elbow/shoulder movements
- 90% strength of uninvolved arm
- Tolerates higher-level strengthening without soreness or swelling

Cleared by medical professional or physical therapist

### 1. Shoulder 'Y' (Band)

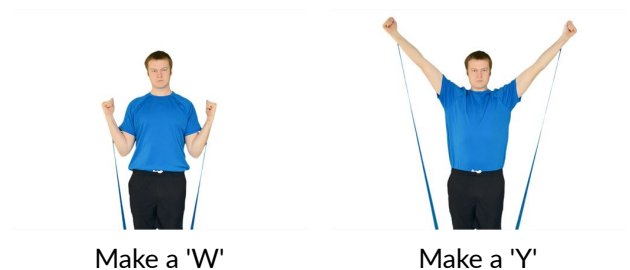
**Sets:** 3 | **Reps:** 10-15 | **Frequency:** 3-4x/week

**Preparation:**

- Stand with good posture
- Make a 'W' with your arms holding a resistive band

**Execution:**

- Now raise your arms up overhead to make a 'Y' with your body



### 2. T Row | Shoulders (Band)

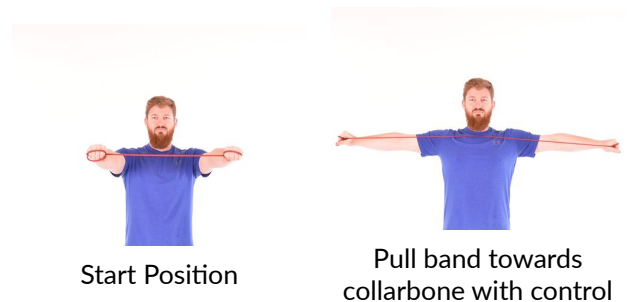
**Sets:** 3 | **Reps:** 10-15 | **Frequency:** 3-4x/week

**Preparation:**

- Stand with hands in front of shoulders as shown

**Execution:**

- Pull band towards collarbone with control
- Bring shoulder blades together
- Keep elbows straight



### 3. Shoulder 'W' | Bilateral

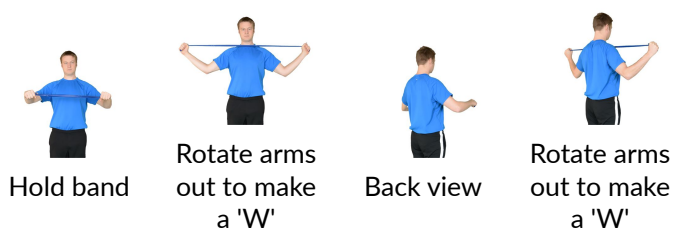
Sets: 3 | Reps: 10-15 | Frequency: 3-4x/week

#### Preparation:

- Stand with band in hands in front of you.

#### Execution:

- Rotate your arms outwards to make a 'W'
- Keep the elbows stationary



### 4. Push Up | Knees

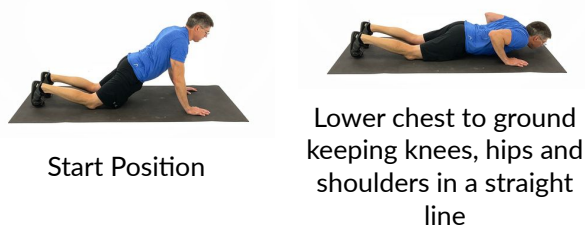
Sets: 3 | Reps: 10-15 | Frequency: 3-4x/week

#### Preparation:

- Start in a plank position from your knees
- Keep your knees, hips and shoulders in a straight line

#### Execution:

- Lower your chest to the ground
- Push your body back up keeping knees, hips and shoulders in a straight line
- Repeat



### 5. Push Up | Toes - \*Only if you can do with good form

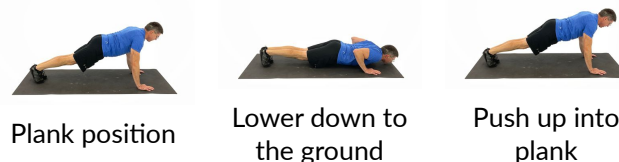
Sets: 3 | Reps: 10-15 | Frequency: 3-4x/week

#### Preparation:

- Start in a plank position
- Hands under shoulders

#### Execution:

- Lower body down with control, keeping shoulders, hips and knees in a straight line
- Press body away from floor
- Repeat



### 6. Front Plank Walkout (Ball)

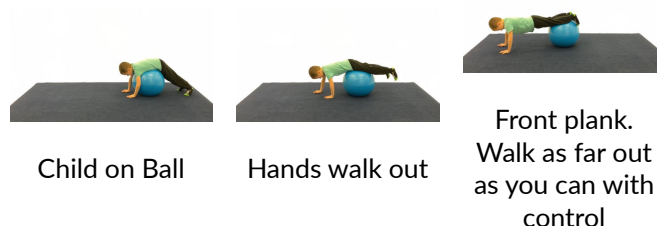
Sets: 3 | Hold: 20-60sec | Frequency: 3-4x/week

#### Preparation:

- Child starts with stomach on ball

#### Execution:

- Encourage your child to walk their body forward until only their legs are supported by the ball
- Make sure they go slow and controlled



## Phase 4: Return to Throwing Phase (10-14 weeks)

---

**Goals:** Gradual return to sport-specific activity

**Interventions:**

- Begin **interval throwing program**:
  - Start with short toss (30–45 ft), low intensity
  - Increase distance and effort gradually over several weeks
  - Monitor for symptoms during and after sessions
- Reinforce throwing mechanics
- Maintain full-body conditioning, flexibility, and strength

**Criteria for Full Return to Play:**

- Pain-free throughout full throwing program
- Normal throwing mechanics
- Symmetrical strength and endurance
- Medical clearance
- Athlete is confident and shows no signs of compensation