



Checklist for Acute Examination of the Elbow and Forearm

History

Ask questions pertaining to the following:

- ☐ Chief complaint
- ☐ Mechanism of injury
- ☐ Unusual sounds or sensations
- ☐ Type and location of pain or symptoms
- ☐ Previous injury
- ☐ Previous injury to opposite extremity for bilateral comparison

Observation

- ☐ Visible facial expressions of pain
- ☐ Swelling, deformity, skin coloration, abnormal contours, or discoloration
- ☐ Does the athlete let the arm hang and swing, or does the athlete hold or splint the arm?
- ☐ Overall position, posture, and alignment
- ☐ Carrying angle
- ☐ Alignment of the medial and lateral epicondyle and olecranon process (extended and flexed elbow)
- ☐ Flexed elbow posture
- ☐ Muscle development—are there areas of muscular atrophy?
- ☐ Bilateral comparison

Palpation

Bilaterally palpate for pain, tenderness, and deformity over the following:

- ☐ Medial epicondyle and supracondylar ridge
- ☐ Olecranon process, olecranon fossa, and proximal ulna
- ☐ Lateral epicondyle and supracondylar ridge, radial head
- ☐ Flexor–pronator group, ulnar nerve, medial collateral ligament

- ☐ Olecranon bursa, distal triceps
- ☐ Extensor–supinator muscle group, brachioradialis, lateral collateral ligament, annular ligament
- ☐ Biceps tendon, brachial artery, median nerve

Special Tests

- ☐ Collateral stress tests
- ☐ Radioulnar joint stress test
- ☐ Biceps tendon test

Range of Motion

- ☐ Active ROM for elbow flexion and extension, forearm pronation and supination
- ☐ Active ROM for shoulder flexion and extension and wrist flexion and extension as appropriate
- ☐ Passive ROM for the same motions as for active ROM
- ☐ Bilateral comparison

Strength Tests

- ☐ Perform manual resistance against the same motions as in active ROM.
- ☐ Check bilateral comparison; note any pain or weakness.
- ☐ Perform manual resistance for wrist flexion and extension and shoulder flexion and extension as appropriate.

Neurovascular Tests

- ☐ Sensory, motor, and reflex of nerve roots C5, C6, C7, C8, and T1
- ☐ Sensory and motor for median, ulnar, musculocutaneous, and radial peripheral nerves
- ☐ Distal pulse (radial pulse; capillary refill)

Functional Tests