

NEXT...

BLOOD WORK

Tennis elbow, shin splints, Nintendo thumb—every sport has a name for tendinitis, but few have a good way to treat it. Docs try everything: cortisone, Botox, ultrasound, surgery. Now one Stanford MD says there's a better way.

Allan Mishra, an orthopedic surgeon with Stanford Hospital & Clinics, treats Olympians, PGA golfers and players for both the SF Giants and the 49ers. "Tennis elbow is a misnomer," he says. "It can come from any repetitive activity, from golfing to gardening." In a two-year study

now ending, Mishra has treated tendinitis with a new technique that uses the body's own proteins, called growth factors, to heal itself. "We take your blood," Mishra says, "concentrate it, and give it back to you." In less ghoulish terms, Mishra injects patients with a cocktail of their own plasma. Because tendinitis occurs in areas with poor blood supply, the idea is that this serum of protein-rich platelets helps develop new cells and heal injured ones. And since it's your own blood, there's no adverse effect. Eight weeks after injecting affected elbows, patients reported a 60% reduction of pain, versus just 16% in the control group. After six months, patients reported that more than 80% of their pain had disappeared. Mishra is awaiting FDA approval before broadening his treatment to other areas of the body. That could come as early as this fall. As for the most widespread form of tendinitis, Mishra is optimistic. "We haven't treated Nintendo thumb," he says. "Yet."

-LUCAS CONLEY

