

Education

Bursitis

What is bursitis?

Bursitis is inflammation of a bursa. A bursa is a fluid-filled sac that surrounds joints or tendons. A bursa reduces friction by cushioning muscles or tendons and bones that move back and forth across each other. The elbow, hip, knee, shoulder, and other joints contain a cushioning bursa.

How does it occur?

Irritation, injury, or pressure to a bursa can cause inflammation, resulting in swelling and pain.

Causes of bursitis include:

- Injury of a joint from sports activities, such as baseball, tennis, racquetball, and running, can cause the disorder.
- Frequent irritation or friction on a body part from other activities, including everyday household jobs such as yardwork, shoveling dirt or snow, and house painting, can cause bursitis.
- Prepatellar bursitis, which is also called housemaid's knee, results from kneeling on a hard or raised surface for long periods.
- Olecranon bursitis, nicknamed student's elbow, results from repeated pressure on the point of the elbow. It often occurs when someone leans on a table or desk for a long time.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of bursitis usually include swelling, redness, and pain in the affected area, which is normally near a joint.

How is it diagnosed?

Your health care provider will examine you to determine if you have bursitis or another condition. He or she may use a needle and syringe to get a sample of fluid from the bursa to rule out infections and to find the cause of the bursitis. To gain more information, your provider may ask you to have x-rays and blood tests.

How is it treated?

To relieve symptoms of bursitis:

- Rest the affected joint.
- Do not put any pressure on the sore and swollen area until the swelling subsides.
- Put an ice pack on the area for 20 to 30 minutes 3 or 4 times a day to help relieve pain.
- Wear a compression wrap around the affected area (such as the elbow or knee).
- A nonprescription anti-inflammatory medicine, such as ibuprofen, may also help relieve pain and swelling.
- Maintain your range of motion by moving the joint to help keep the joint from getting stiff.
- Gradually build strength in the area with gentle exercise.
- Wait 3 to 6 weeks before returning to the sport or task that originally caused the problem.

Your provider may also prescribe an anti-inflammatory drug.

If symptoms still persist:

- Your provider may remove excess fluid from the swollen area with a needle and syringe. The provider may then wrap the injured site or splint it to keep the liquid from refilling the area and to prevent you from moving it.
- Your provider may inject the inflamed area with a steroid drug, usually cortisone, and a local anesthetic to reduce swelling, redness, and pain.
- Your provider may recommend surgery to take out the bursa if your condition continues to be troublesome despite

treatment.

How long will the effects last?

With treatment, the pain and swelling of bursitis usually clear up within 1 or 2 weeks.

When should I call my health care provider?

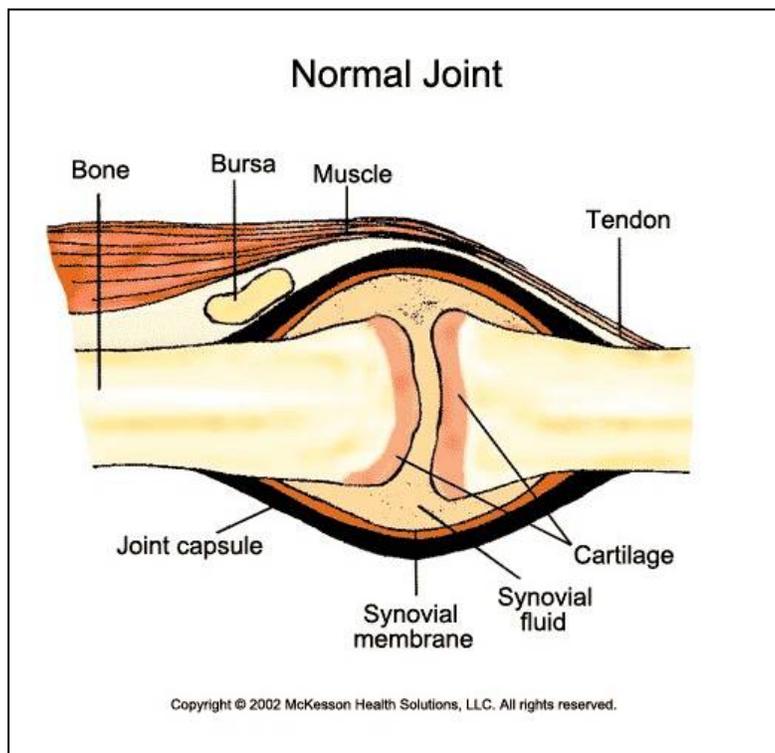
In bursitis, the bursa is inflamed but not infected. If the swelling spreads despite treatment or if you develop fever, chills, or increased warmth, you should see a health care provider immediately. These are signs of possible infection.

How can I help prevent bursitis?

There are no specific steps you can take to prevent bursitis from occurring again. You may choose not to do the activity that caused the bursitis originally or try not to overuse or reinjure the affected area.

Avoid pressure and injury to the joint by wearing a protective pad.

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