



Bursitis

What Is Bursitis?

Bursitis is inflammation or irritation of a bursa sac. You have these sacs all over your body. They're filled with fluid that helps ease rubbing and friction between tissues like bone, muscle, tendons, and skin. Bursitis is common around major joints like your shoulder, elbow, hip, or knee.

Bursitis Causes and Risk Factors

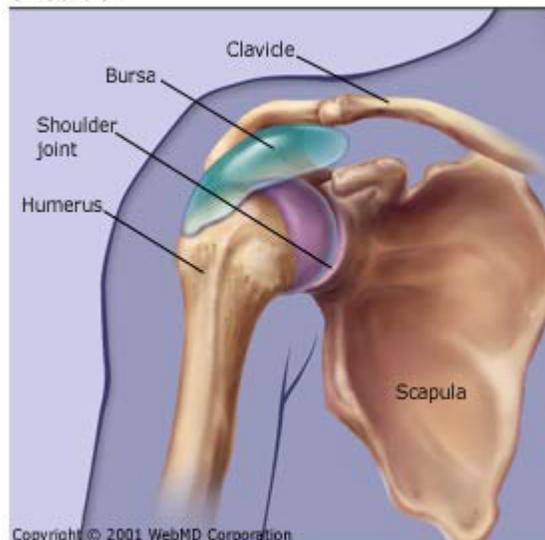
Bursitis is common in adults, especially after age 40.

It's usually caused by repeated pressure on an area or by using a joint too much. High-risk activities include gardening, raking, carpentry, shoveling, painting, scrubbing, tennis, golf, skiing, and throwing. You can also get bursitis by sitting or standing the wrong way for a long time at work or home, or by not stretching enough before you exercise. Sudden injury can sometimes cause bursitis.

As you age, your tendons aren't able to handle stress as well. They're less elastic and easier to tear.

If there's a problem with the structure of a bone or joint (such as legs that are different lengths or arthritis in a joint), that can put more stress on a bursa, causing bursitis. Reactions to medications and stress or inflammation from other conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis, gout, psoriatic arthritis, or thyroid disorders, may also raise your risk.

Shoulder



An infection, especially with *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria, can sometimes cause bursitis.

Bursitis Types

Bursitis might affect your:

- Elbow
- Shoulder
- Hip or thigh
- Buttocks
- Knee
- Achilles tendon or heel

Bursitis Symptoms

Pain is the most common symptom of bursitis. It might build up slowly or be sudden and severe, especially if you have calcium deposits in the area. Your joint might also be:

- Stiff
- Swollen
- Red

Call your doctor if you have:

- Fever (over 102)
- Swelling, redness, and warmth in the area
- General illness or more than one area that hurts
- Trouble moving the joint

These could be signs of an infection or another problem that needs medical care right away.

Bursitis Prevention

You can't always prevent bursitis, but some steps can lower your risk.

- Use cushions or pads when you're resting a joint on a hard surface, like if you're kneeling or sitting.

- If you play sports, mix things up so you don't make the same motions all the time. Warm up and stretch before you play, and always use proper form.
- Start slowly and easily when you're trying a new exercise or sport. As you build strength, you can use more force and do the motion more often.
- Don't sit still for a long time.
- Take breaks often when you're making the same motions over and over again.
- Use good posture all day.
- Keep a healthy body weight.
- If something hurts, stop doing it and check with your doctor.

Bursitis Diagnosis

Your doctor will ask about your symptoms and do a physical exam to see if the joint is swollen. You might also have tests including:

- **Imaging tests.** X-rays can rule out other problems that might be causing pain. MRI and ultrasound give your doctor an image of your joint.
- **Lab tests.** Your doctor might use a needle to take a bit of fluid from your bursa and test it for signs of infection.

Bursitis Treatment

Take these steps to treat bursitis:

- Avoid activities that make it worse
- Rest and raise the area
- Put a brace, band, or splint on the joint
- Ice the area
- Take over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medicines

See your doctor if you don't feel better after a week. They might give you medications like steroids, which work quickly to lower inflammation and pain. Your doctor might prescribe pills to swallow or use a needle to inject them into the irritated area. They might also inject pain medications.

Physical therapy can help you strengthen muscles and give you more range of motion in the joint.

If you have an infected bursa, your doctor might use a needle to take out fluid. You'll probably need antibiotics.

It's rare, but you might need surgery if other treatments aren't helping.

Sources 

Arthritis Foundation: "Bursitis."

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TeensHealth.org: "Bursitis."

Merck Manual Consumer Version: "Bursitis."

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Mayo Clinic: "Bursitis."

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