

Bursitis

By Jessica Pennington, PT

Bursitis is a condition that can occur in numerous body parts. Bursas are sac-like, fluid filled structures located in most joints of the body. The purpose of a bursa is to prevent friction between the tendons, ligaments and bones of joints. Bursas provide cushion to a joint and allow structures to run smoothly over each other.

With increased or repetitive use of a joint or the use of a joint in an unnatural position the structures in the joint can become inflamed. With this inflammation the structures of the joint are squeezed in an already tight space. This creates pain in the joint which is usually the first and most predominant symptoms of bursitis.

Bursitis of the knee can be caused by prolonged kneeling or traumatic falls. Shoulder bursitis is common with overhead activity or side sleeping. Avoidance and modification of these activities may help prevent the inflammation of the bursa. Active movements of the inflamed joint, as well as passive movement into extreme range of motion are painful. Pressure over the bursa and joint also increases tenderness.

Treatment for bursitis is focused on anti-inflammation. At home this can be accomplished with rest and applying ice to the area. Ice should be applied for approximately 20 minutes. If pain does not resolve within a week you should contact your physician. Anti-inflammatory medication and/or physical therapy may be prescribed by your doctor. A stretching and strengthening program of the muscles around the joint will help prevent future episodes of bursitis.

The above is intended as general information only. Be sure to contact your physician for advice on your own specific medical problems. Have a question? Write to Questions from the Field, Gananda-Walworth Physical Therapy, PO Box 82, Walworth, NY 14568, or send e-mail to gwpt@rochester.rr.com.