

Bursitis

Overview:

Certain areas of the musculoskeletal system experience significant stress from everyday living. Fluid filled sacs, called bursae (bursa) cushion the bones, tendons and muscles near your joints. Unfortunately bursae can become inflamed and irritated and this is call bursitis. Bursitis often occurs near joints that perform frequent repetitive motion. The most common sites for this to occur are the hips knees, shoulders and elbows.

Diagnosis:

The patient with bursitis will complain of well-localized pain in the shoulder, hips or other joints. The pain may travel from one of these areas into the arm or thigh. When the doctor examines the patient, he or she will look for swelling and tenderness over the locations of the bursa. Doctor can often diagnose bursitis based on the medical history and physical exam. If further testing is needed, the doctor may order x-rays. X ray images can't positively establish the diagnosis of bursitis but they can help to exclude other cause of your discomfort. The bulk of bursa inflammation occurs in the soft tissue, which cannot be seen on X-ray.

Treatment:

There are many treatment for bursitis. In the early stages, an anti-inflammatory drug will frequently help the problem. Ice should can also be applied over the inflamed area several times during the day to assist with swelling. It is important to rest the affected area. For example, avoid elbow pressure by not leaning on the elbow or if the right hip is affected, try to sleep on the left side. If these treatment strategies fail to work, the doctor may inject an anti-inflammatory drug and /or corticosteroid directly and into the bursa. These drugs are very useful for the relief of inflammation. These drugs generally bring rapid pain relief and in many cases, one injection is all you need. Although if more than one injection is needed, these medications can only be used a few times each year. Physical therapy may be ordered to strengthen the muscles in the affected area to ease pain and prevent recurrence. The physical therapist may use ultrasound and soft tissue manipulation that can sometimes be helpful. Sometimes an inflamed bursa must be surgically drained.

