Bursitis



What is bursitis?

Inflammation of the bursa is known as bursitis. A bursa is a small sac containing fluid that lies between bones and other body parts such as tendons and muscles. A bursa allows a tendon to move smoothly over a bone by acting as an anti-friction device and shielding tendons from rubbing against bones. Bursae are found in the foot, knee, hip, elbow, shoulder and wrist. If the tendons become thickened and bumpy from excessive use, the bursa is subjected to increased friction and may become inflamed.

Where are the symptoms?

The main symptom of bursitis is pain and swelling in or around the joint. In some cases, especially for shoulder bursitis, people may experience some restriction of movement and stiffness.

How is bursitis recognized?

The diagnosis of bursitis is made by physical examination. To confirm the diagnosis, medical tests such as x-rays may be necessary.

How is bursitis treated?

The treatment of bursitis includes anti-inflammatory medication. It is also important to avoid or reduce any work activities suspected of causing bursitis. Most patients respond to treatment and they usually go back to work without any restriction.

What occupations are at risk?

Carpet and floor layers, painters, tile setters, and gardeners/landscapers that require kneeling are at risk for bursitis to the knees. Working with the arms above shoulder level can give rise to shoulder bursitis.

How can we prevent bursitis?

The prevention of bursitis should focus on the avoidance of kneeling that causes friction and mechanical trauma on the knees. If kneeling is necessary, knee pads and sitting/kneeling support should be used.

Working for prolonged periods with arms above shoulder level causes friction on the bursa of the shoulder. To avoid bursitis in the shoulder, it is necessary to raise the worker by using a platform or to lower the work object.

General prevention steps include:

- Strengthen muscles around the joint, but begin new exercises or activities carefully.
- Take breaks from repetitive tasks. Stop activities that cause pain.
- Use foam for kneeling or elbow pads.
- Increase the gripping surface of tools with gloves or padding. Apply grip tape or an oversized grip.
- Use two hands to hold heavy tools.
- If you have a history of bursitis or tendinitis, ask your doctor or therapist before beginning new exercises and activities.

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