



## Points To Remember About Bursitis

- Bursitis is swelling in the bursa, a small, fluid-filled sac that cushions the bones and other body parts.
- Bursitis is typically caused by repetitive movements that hurt the bursae over time.
- To reduce risk of bursitis, don't sit still for long periods of time, cushion your joints when kneeling or putting pressure on your elbows, and take frequent breaks from repetitive tasks.
- Bursitis is usually treated with rest, gentle exercise, and medication, but some severe cases may require surgery.

## What is bursitis?

Bursitis is a common condition that causes swelling and pain around muscles and bones. Bursitis is the swelling of the bursa, a small, fluid-filled sac that acts as a cushion between a bone and other moving parts, such as muscles, tendons, or skin.

## Who gets bursitis?

You are more likely to get bursitis if you do the same kinds of movements every day or put stress on your joints. People like carpenters, gardeners, musicians, and athletes often get bursitis. Infection, [arthritis](#), [gout](#), thyroid disease, and diabetes can also cause bursitis. Bursitis is more likely the older you get.

## What are the symptoms of bursitis?

Bursitis causes swelling and pain around muscles and bones, especially around joints. Bursae are found throughout the body, but bursitis is most common in shoulders, elbows, wrists, hips, knees, and ankles.

## What causes bursitis?

Bursitis is usually caused by overusing a joint, but it can also be caused by direct trauma.

Kneeling or leaning your elbows on a hard surface for a long time can make you more likely to get bursitis.

## Is there a test for bursitis?

To diagnose bursitis, your doctor will probably ask questions about your medical history and conduct a physical examination. Your doctor will probably ask you to describe your pain and will ask when and where you hurt and whether anything makes the pain better or worse.

Your doctor may also do other tests, such as:

- Touching the joint to see whether the tendons, which are another part of your joints, are swollen.
- X-rays, which do not show the bursae, but can help rule out other problems.
- A magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) test, which can show whether the bursae is swollen.
- Taking fluid from the swollen area to test for an infection.

## How is bursitis treated?

Treating bursitis can reduce pain and swelling. Some common treatments include:

- Resting and elevating the injured area.
- Limiting your activity, in order to reduce further injury.
- Taking medicines that will reduce swelling, such as aspirin, naproxen, or ibuprofen.
- Gentle stretching and strengthening exercises.
- Applying compression to the injured area.
- Putting a brace, splint, or band on the injured joint.

If an infection is causing your bursitis, your doctor will probably prescribe antibiotics. Your doctor may also recommend ice for sudden, severe injuries, but most cases of bursitis are long term, and ice does not help.

If your bursitis does not improve, your doctor may inject a corticosteroid medicine into the area surrounding the inflamed bursa. Although these injections are common, they must be used with caution because they can lead to weakening or rupture of tendons. If your bursitis does not improve after 6 months to a year, your doctor may recommend surgery to repair damage and relieve pressure on your bursae.

## Who treats bursitis?

Several types of health care professionals may treat you, including:

- A primary care physician.
- Physical therapists, who help to improve joint function.
- Orthopaedists, who treat and perform surgery for bone and joint diseases.
- Rheumatologists, who treat [arthritis](#) and other disease of the bones, joints, and muscles.

Can I prevent it?

## Can I prevent bursitis?

Bursitis typically happens when a person overuses their joints. Here are some tips to protect your joints:

- Exercise regularly.
- Start new activities or exercise regimens slowly, so you can see if an exercise is putting too much stress on your joints.
- Take breaks from repetitive tasks often.
- Use two hands to hold heavy tools, and use a two-handed backhand in tennis.
- Don't sit still for long periods.
- Practice good posture throughout the day.

## For more info

Read about [tendinitis](#), a common joint problem that shares many common characteristics with bursitis.

### **U.S. Food and Drug Administration**

Toll free: 888-INFO-FDA (888-463-6332)

Website: <https://www.fda.gov>

Drugs@FDA at <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/daf>. Drugs@FDA is a searchable catalog of FDA-approved drug products.

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics**

Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs>

### **American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons**

Website: <https://www.aaos.org>

### **American College of Rheumatology**

Website: <https://www.rheumatology.org>

### **American Physical Therapy Association**

Website: <https://www.apta.org>

### **Arthritis Foundation**

Website: <https://www.arthritis.org>

If you need more information about available resources in your language or other languages, please visit our webpages below or contact the NIAMS Information Clearinghouse at [NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov](mailto:NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov).

- [Asian Language Health Information](#)
- [Spanish Language Health Information](#)