



for your best health

BURSITIS: GOT PAIN!

Ask Your Pharmacist

The pain has become unbearable. Maybe it has kept you from enjoying a favorite activity or imposed on your livelihood with the overall effect of detracting from the quality of your life. If you spend a lot of time on the computer, you may feel your shoulders aching as you type away those emails. If this sounds familiar, chances are you might be suffering from bursitis. The good news is that most cases of bursitis may be easily treated, and don't require much more than a little inconvenience and a few lifestyle changes.

Bursitis is an inflammation of the bursae, small pockets of connective tissue and fluid found near joints and other areas of intense movement. Normally, bursae allow the body to move smoothly and without pain, with tendons and muscles sliding easily across bony areas. Hundreds of bursae occupy places like the knee, elbow, hip, shoulder, and heel. Inflammation of a bursa leads to intense pain upon movement of the affected joint.

There are more than 80 different bursae that can be affected by our lifestyles. The diverse names are suggestive of the number of affected parts of the body and a sign of the times. So called, the *Student's Elbow* is bursitis of the elbow which may result from leaning one's arm against a desk or a table for prolonged periods of time, a common position for students to assume while in the classroom. Dating back to the days when people scrubbed floors on all fours, bursitis of the knee is commonly called the *housemaid's knee*. More recently, with technological innovations like Nintendo, the term *Nintendo thumb* was coined and the condition has been affecting avid gamers since the 1990s. Additionally, with the popularity of text messaging, more and more cell phone users are also affected by the condition. Hence we can see that bursitis is typically caused by prolonged behavior; so repeated activity affects the condition of the joints we use for that behavior.

Symptoms of bursitis are similar to those of osteoarthritis or tendonitis, and include pain, tenderness, stiffness, swelling, and/or redness. Because of these similarities, most physicians prescribe non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) for all three conditions, to relieve inflammation and associated pain.

Bursitis may result from two scenarios: 1) repetitive movement, or 2) continuous pressure. Painting a wall is an example of repetitive movement, with its sweeping vertical strokes. Bursitis management therefore includes avoidance of the offending activity. However, patients should not stop moving completely.

Exercise that strengthens surrounding muscles will help to take pressure away from the bursae during movement, and may also help in the management of arthritis, if present. Patients may also need to take frequent breaks from moving the affected area and use cushioning when possible. Once the inflammation subsides, water exercises like swimming may provide low-impact strength building until the bursa has healed completely.

Many cases of bursitis resolve themselves, especially with the use of NSAIDs and avoidance of irritating activity. If the symptoms of bursitis are persistent, corticosteroid injections may be considered. This very powerful anti-inflammatory medication can be injected directly to the site of inflammation. This can be extremely helpful for situations that are not improved with rest, and can provide immediate relief for a swollen and tender joint. Patients who suffer from extreme bursitis pain may choose to undergo a more drastic treatment, such as bursa drainage or surgical excision.

Dietary changes like eating more fruits and vegetables and drinking plenty of water may also be helpful. Patients may also benefit from ice packs placed on the affected joint.

HOLISTIC APPROACHES

For bursitis sufferers interested in holistic approaches to alleviate their condition, nutritional supplements and herbs can be used to reduce the pain and swelling of inflammation. Our pharmacists can guide you on the correct type of supplement for your condition. Most supplements that have been found effective for inflammation associated with arthritis and sports injuries are also effective for reducing symptoms of bursitis.

WHITE WILLOW BARK

White willow bark may help to reduce inflammation and pain associated with bursitis. The *Salix* species of trees (namely the white willow tree) contains constituents that are very effective in reducing pain

Visit our pharmacy or website to learn more about what you can do for Bursitis.

BURSITIS (continued)

and inflammation. In fact, the modern day aspirin is derived from a type of willow bark.

CAYENNE

Cayenne contains a chemical called capsaicin, which may help to reduce pain when applied topically to the affected joint.

TURMERIC

Curcuma longa, known as turmeric, has been used in Ayurvedic medicine for centuries. Its many uses make it a very versatile remedy, but its anti-inflammatory properties are what help bursitis. When used orally, curcumin exhibits many direct anti-inflammatory effects such as inhibiting the formation of blood clots and stabilizing cell membranes, thereby preventing the release of inflammatory mediators.

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supplement regime.

MSM

MSM (methyl sulfonyl methane) is a natural sulfur compound found in all living things. It has been shown to add flexibility to cell walls, allowing fluids to pass through the tissue more easily. MSM appears to inhibit pain and inflammation, and research suggests that MSM may have a variety of benefits for people with all types of arthritis. MSM can be taken orally or applied topically, and is well tolerated when using proper dosing guidelines.

OMEGA 3 FATTY ACIDS

When it comes to inflammation, omega 3 fatty acids are extremely effective. Omega 3 fatty acids have two main functions: they are involved in the integrity and fluidity of cell membranes and are also converted to a number of important substances called prostaglandins which are anti-inflammatory in nature. Numerous medical studies show a reduction of pain and inflammation in those suffering from osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, when supplementing with omega 3 fatty acids.

MAKING AN INFORMED CHOICE

Interactions between food, herbs, and drugs are more common than most people realize. Today, many people are taking herbal and nutritional supplements in addition to their "conventional" prescription medications. This multiplies the opportunities for unforeseen or harmful reactions. It is therefore vitally important to know how drugs, nutrients, and herbs react with each other. Information is often the key to preventing many of these unwanted or harmful reactions. Consult our pharmacist who can help you make an informed and effective choice regarding your