

# Bursitis & Tendonitis

## Bursitis

Throughout the body there are points where separate structures must move freely in relation to each other; however, they also must have tight opposition. A typical example would be where a tendon (which is the fibrous rope-like structure which attaches muscles to the bone) must move around a sharp, bony protrusion in a pulley-like fashion. In order for these movements to take place easily, the body has bursae, which are lubricating membranes. In reality bursae are two membranes placed close together with a slippery fluid in between them.

Bursitis will frequently develop because the membrane, which makes up the bursa, has an inadequate nutritional level. In the presence of inadequate nutrition, tissue is not as strong as it should be. It is very important for the bursal membranes to have an excellent health level because by the very nature of the membrane it is subjected to significant stress. A lowered membrane health level is cause for breakdown during periods of wear. Sometimes an individual will go out and work extra hard in the garden, at sports, or some other physical activity, and develop bursitis. The physical activity gets blamed for the bursitis; actually, the membrane – in a lowered state of health – was just waiting for some extra stress to begin manifesting symptoms. If, upon examination, an inadequate protein level or some other factor causing lowered tissue health is found, it may be necessary to either change an individual's diet, add nutritional supplements, or improve the digestive system so that the body can correctly utilize the food that it is obtaining.

It is very important to remove the cause of bursitis, because long-term bursitis can ultimately cause permanent damage. The damage is caused in exactly the same way that a bearing in your automobile wears out when it does not obtain adequate lubrication.

There are many methods of evaluation which your doctor will use to determine the exact reason for the bursitis. Laboratory tests and x-ray are important, as are the specialized tests of applied kinesiology for muscular balance and function.

The term "bursitis" is derived from a combination of "bursa" and "itis", a word termination meaning inflammation. So when we have bursitis present, we have an inflammation of the lubricating membrane, usually at or about a joint.

There are four classic signs when inflammation is present. These are pain, heat, redness, and swelling. The basic reason inflammatory processes develop is injury to the

tissue, whether the injury is a result of physical stress or of a pathological nature – such as infection.

Obviously, when the bursa is inflamed it cannot provide its primary function of lubrication. This is particularly important because most of the locations for bursa are at points of high stress or high wear.

The key factor when bursitis is present is not the removal of the symptoms of pain and limited function of the area; rather, it is finding the exact cause of the bursitis and eliminating that cause. It is very common to use symptomatic treatment for bursitis in the form of pain killers and the anti-inflammatory drugs.

Bursitis very often parallels the different forms of arthritis and is caused by some of the same factors that cause arthritis. Protein and calcium metabolism are very important in the development of certain types of arthritis as in the development of bursitis. Uric acid metabolism is important in gouty arthritis; it can also be the cause of bursitis. One of the most common causes of bursitis is excessive structural strain. The bursa becomes inflamed as a result of excessive wear in an area which already has hard wear. This excessive stress often comes about because of muscular pull which is imbalanced. For example, a joint (such as the shoulder) has many muscles which must work in unison for normal joint movement. Some of the muscles must relax as other muscles contract, and they must do so at exactly the right time and in the right amount. If this muscular balance is not present, it must be regained or – regardless of the treatment to the bursa itself – the condition will remain, flaring up again after the medication has worn off.

## What is Bursitis?

Bursitis is the painful inflammation of a bursa, a little lubricating bag that is intended to reduce friction between tendons and bones. Bursas are small body sacs made of two membranes set close together with a lubricating fluid between them. Ordinarily, bursas work fine in helping the tendons move smoothly around the sharp bony protrusions. Occasionally the bursa break down and become ineffective and painful, a condition called bursitis.

## What's Behind Bursitis?

Bursitis usually stems from too much pressure over the joint – often from consistently off-balanced movements or from an injury to a nearby joint. "Housemaid knee," for example, is bursitis that occurs around the kneecap. But it can happen near any joint-shoulder, elbow, heel, even the base of the big

toe! In many cases, it results in pain, swelling, heat, and redness.

### **What Can Be Done About It?**

While bursitis might temporarily clear up in a week or two – especially if the pressure is kept off the spot – bursitis can persist much longer if not treated. And it has a tendency to recur in the same spot again and again after it's “cured.” This recurrence is not only painful but can cause permanent damage, somewhat like a car that repeatedly runs out of lubrication between the bearings. It is vital to find and eliminate the causes behind the inflammation and pain. If you should have a bursitis flare-up, call on your Doctor of Chiropractic promptly – not only to relieve the immediate problem, but to diagnose and correct the condition that caused the bursitis in the first place.

### **TENDONITIS**

A tendon is a fibrous cord which attaches muscle to bone. Very commonly, tendons must go around sharp corners, through narrow spaces, and be in contact with other points of high wear. Commonly there is a bursa which lubricates the sliding tendon, decreasing the wear present. It may be at one of these joints that bursitis develops or tendonitis may develop. “Tendonitis” means inflammation of a tendon. The same basic principle indicated above in reference to bursitis are present in tendonitis. The only major difference is the tissue involved, the sliding activity of the tendon, and the locations within the body. The same thorough evaluation of the cause of tendonitis is very important in eliminating the condition – not just overriding its symptoms.