



Shoulder Bursitis

What is shoulder bursitis?

Shoulder bursitis is an irritation or inflammation of the bursa in your shoulder. A bursa is a fluid-filled sac that acts as a cushion between tendons, bones, and skin.

How does it occur?

The shoulder bursa can become inflamed from repetitive motion of the shoulder. Shoulder bursitis often occurs in sports with overhead activities such as swimming, tennis, or throwing. It may also occur in occupational activities such as painting or carpentry.

What are the symptoms?

You have pain on the outer front side of your shoulder. Your shoulder may hurt when you lift your arm above your head. The outer side of your shoulder may become swollen and may at times feel warm.

How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will review your symptoms and examine your shoulder.

How is it treated?

Treatment may include:

- ice packs on your shoulder for 20 to 30 minutes every 3 to 4 hours for 2 to 3 days or until the pain goes away
- anti-inflammatory medicine or other pain medicines. Adults aged 65 years and older should not take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicine for more than 7 days without their healthcare provider's approval.
- a shot of a corticosteroid medicine into the bursa to reduce the inflammation and pain
- exercises to help in your recovery.

How long will the effects last?

The length of recovery depends on many factors such as your age, health, and if you have had a previous injury. Recovery time also depends on the severity of the injury. A bursa that is only mildly inflamed and has just started to hurt may improve within a few weeks. A bursa that is significantly inflamed and has been painful for a long time may take up to a few months to improve. You need to stop doing the activities that cause pain until your shoulder has healed. If you continue doing activities that cause pain, your symptoms will return and it will take longer to recover.

When can I return to my normal activities?

Everyone recovers from an injury at a different rate. Return to your activities will be determined by how soon your shoulder recovers, not by how many days or weeks it has been since your injury has occurred. In general, the longer you have symptoms before you start treatment, the longer it will take to get better. The goal of rehabilitation is to return you to your normal activities as soon as is safely possible. If you return too soon you may worsen your injury.

You may safely return to your activities when:

- Your injured shoulder has full range of motion without pain.
- Your injured shoulder has regained normal strength compared to the uninjured shoulder.

How can I prevent shoulder bursitis?

Be sure to warm up properly and stretch your shoulder before such activities as throwing, playing tennis, or swimming. If your shoulder begins to hurt during these activities, you may need to slow down until the pain goes away.