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Olecranon Bursitis

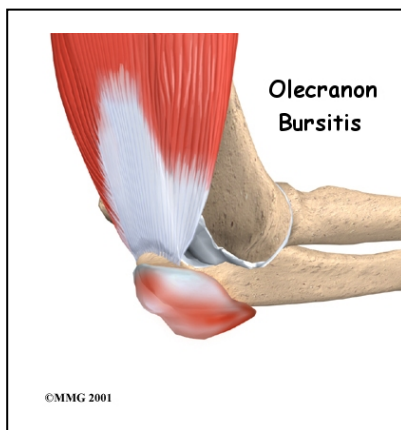
Olecranon bursitis is inflammation of a small sac of fluid located on the tip of the elbow.

This inflammation can cause many problems in the elbow.

Bursitis could be septic, inflammatory, Gout

Usually non-operative treatment and sometimes surgical

Where is the olecranon bursa, and what does it do?



A bursa is a sac made of thin, slippery tissue.

Bursae occur in the body wherever skin, muscles, or tendons need to slide over bone.

Bursae are lubricated with a small amount of fluid inside that helps reduce friction from the sliding parts.

How does olecranon bursitis develop?

Bursitis inflamed in a number of ways.

Olecranon bursitis can also occur over a longer period of time. People who constantly put their elbows on a hard surface as part of their activities or job can repeatedly injure the bursa. This repeated injury can lead to irritation and thickening of the bursa over time. The chronic irritation leads to the same condition in the end: olecranon bursitis.

The olecranon bursa can also become infected. This may occur without any warning, or it may be caused by a small injury and infection of the skin over the bursa that spreads down into the bursa. In this case, instead of blood or inflammatory fluid in the bursa, it becomes filled with pus. The area around the bursa becomes hot, red, and very tender.

What does olecranon bursitis feel like?

Pain and swelling in the area at the tip of the elbow.

Sometimes these lumps feel as though something is floating around in the olecranon bursa, and they can be very tender.

The bursa can grow very thick, almost like an elbow pad on the olecranon.

Finally, if the bursa becomes infected, the elbow becomes swollen and very tender and warm to the touch around the bursa. If the infection is not treated quickly, the abscess may even begin to **drain**, meaning the pus begins to seep out.

How do doctors identify the condition?

1. The physical examination.
2. X-rays may be necessary to make sure that the elbow isn't fractured.
3. Aspiration of the bursa
4. Blood test: for infection and for Gout

What can be done for olecranon bursitis?

Nonsurgical Treatment

Olecranon bursitis that is caused by an injury will usually go away on its own. The body will absorb the blood in the bursa over several weeks, and the bursa should return to normal.

Chronic olecranon bursitis is sometimes a real nuisance. The swelling and tenderness get in the way and causes pain. This can create a hardship both at work and during recreational activities. Treatment usually starts by trying to control the inflammation.

This may include a short period of rest. Medications such as ibuprofen and aspirin may be suggested by your doctor to control the inflammation and swelling. An elbow pad might be useful in making it easier to put the elbow on hard surfaces.

Surgery

Bursa Removal

Surgery is sometimes necessary to remove a thickened bursa that has not improved with any other treatment. Surgical removal is usually done because the swollen bursa is restricting your activity. To remove the olecranon bursa, an **incision** is made over the tip of the elbow. Since the bursa is outside of the elbow joint, the joint is never entered. The **thickened bursa sac is removed**, and the skin is repaired with stitches.

What should I expect after treatment?

You will have a period of rest.

You will also need to start a careful and gradual exercise program.

Patients often work with a physical or occupational therapist to direct the exercises for their rehabilitation program after surgery.