

Olecranon Bursitis

What is a Olecranon Bursitis?

Olecranon bursitis is inflammation of the bursa, which sits between the triceps tendon and the skin. A bursa is a fluid-filled sac that sits between muscle's tendon and the skin and acts as a cushion. When the bursa becomes inflamed, it swells and becomes thicker. When the Olecranon Bursa swells, a painful, tender lump, which may resemble a golf ball, forms over the tip of the elbow.

What causes Olecranon Bursitis?

Repeated injury, such as banging the tip of the elbow on hard objects, may cause the bursa to swell. Infection, gout and other inflammatory conditions may also lead to bursitis. Infection may occur as a result of a break in the skin over the elbow joint or may travel through the blood stream from another area of infection.

What are the symptoms?

Painful or painless swelling is present over the point of the elbow. If infected, the bursa feels warm and appears red. It is tender to the touch.

How is it diagnosed?

Your surgeon will diagnose Olecranon Bursitis on physical exam. X-rays will show soft tissue swelling and, possibly, signs of the underlying problem, such as gouty arthritis.

How is it treated?

Non-operative

Painless swelling is treated with observation, elbow pads, anti-inflammatory medication and ice. If the swelling becomes painful, your surgeon may drain the fluid from the bursa. If the bursa becomes infected, antibiotics are prescribed, and a small incision is made in the bursa to allow it to drain. Your surgeon may place gauze embedded with a chemical that kills bacteria into the bursa to help clear up the infection.

Operative

For severe cases, or those that do not respond to non-operative treatment, your surgeon will recommend surgery. An incision is made which curves around the tip of the elbow, and the bursa is identified and removed. The soft tissue is washed with saline, and sutures are used to close the wound. A thick, soft dressing or a splint may be applied post-operatively to protect the incision, and early therapy is prescribed to prevent motion loss in the elbow.

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