

FACT SHEET

Bursitis

What Else Is It Called?

- Clergyman’s knee – prepatellar bursitis.
- Olecranon bursitis (elbow).
- Subacromial bursitis (shoulder).
- Other.

What is it?

- Inflammation or degeneration of the sac-like structure over a bone or joint.
- Can be associated with arthritis, particularly with rheumatoid arthritis or gout.
- Repetitive movement disorders can produce specific bursitis – example prolonged kneeling without knee pads can produce pre-patellar bursitis.

How Is It Diagnosed?

History:

- Any acute trauma?
- Any repetitive injury?
- Any systemic disorders?
- Chief complaint is pain at rest and with movement.
- Occasional loss of active movement.
- Tenderness and swelling over the bursa.

What to look for on Examination:

- Evaluate range of motion of the joint.
Is pain and swelling associated with identifiable bursa?

Tests:

- A needle might be used to withdraw fluid to check for infection or gout.
- Imaging studies not normally used for bursitis except for some deep bursa which are difficult to feel.

How is it Treated?

- R.I.C.E.
- Avoid aggravating factors.
- Anti-inflammatory medications may be prescribed.
- Cortisone injections might be recommended.
- Rarely surgery to remove the bursa might be considered.

What is the Predicted Outcome?

- Work-related bursitis generally improves with activity modification.
- Bursitis from systemic disorders often prolonged recovery.

What are Work Restrictions and Accommodations?

- Avoid aggravating factors for time of treatment.
For example, avoiding kneeling or use kneepads to prevent pre-patellar bursitis.

What is the Expected Return to Work Time?

Medical Treatment.	Surgical Treatment.
Job Classification.....RTW Minimum – Maximum	Job Classification.....RTW Minimum – Maximum
Sedentary Work.....0 days	Sedentary Work.....10 days – 35 days (calendar days)
Light Work.....0 days	Medium Work.....21 days – 45 days
Medium Work.....0 days	Heavy Work.....21 days - 84 days
Heavy Work.....7 days – 14 days	
Very Heavy Work.....7 days – 14 days	

*“A safe and timely return to work benefits the patient and his or her family by enhancing recovery and reducing disability.”
Canadian Medical Association*