



PATIENT FACT SHEET

Tendinitis & Bursitis



CONDITION DESCRIPTION

Tendinitis and bursitis are inflammation or breakdown of the soft tissue around muscles and bones. They often affect the shoulders, wrist, neck, hips, knees and ankles.

Tendons are cord-like structures where muscles attach to bone. Tendinitis is often very tender to the touch, and caused by injury or repetitive use. The bursa is a small

sac that cushions moving structures at joints, such as bones, muscles and tendons. It protects the structure from fraying and stress. An inflamed bursa is very painful.

Tendinitis may occur far from joints. Episodes may recur or be chronic. If treated early, episodes are usually short term. People with gout are at higher risk for bursitis. Older people are more at risk for both conditions.



SIGNS/ SYMPTOMS

Tendinitis pain may be sudden, severe, and worse during movement. It may occur after a sudden, intense injury, or overuse from sports like tennis or household chores. Tenderness along the tendon or its outer covering, or at one spot, are signs of tendinitis. Pain may occur when the muscle attached to the tendon is worked against resistance.

Bursitis pain may be very intense during movement or at rest. Bursitis may be caused by an infection with signs

like redness, warmth and swelling of the joint. Rapid worsening of pain, redness, swelling or inability to move the joint are danger signs in both tendinitis and bursitis.

A doctor can diagnose tendinitis or bursitis with a physical exam and medical history. Imaging tests like x-ray, MRI or ultrasound, and blood tests are only needed if the problem recurs or does not go away. Blood tests may confirm suspected infection.



COMMON TREATMENTS

Rest, ice, compression and elevation (RICE) are the immediate treatments for tendinitis and bursitis.

Treatments depend on the inflammation's cause. Reduce force or stress if overuse or injury is the cause. A doctor or physical therapist can help patients adjust movements if tendinitis is job-related.

Medications to relieve pain include nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like aspirin, ibuprofen [Advil, Motrin] and naproxen [Aleve, Naprosyn], or acetaminophen [Tylenol]. Corticosteroid shots offer

short-term benefit. Antibiotics are used to treat infections. Infected bursa may need draining. If gout causes bursitis, treating it may ease pain and swelling.

A splint or brace offers support for affected joints. A cane held in the opposite hand helps support a painful hip. Custom orthotics may relieve ankle tendinitis pain or pressure. Surgery is only needed after months of treatment do not work, or to repair a ruptured Achilles tendon in the lower calf.



CARE/ MANAGEMENT TIPS

To prevent tendinitis or bursitis, stretch and warm up before exercise. Train properly for new sports or activities. Avoid repetitive motion or staying in one position too long. Take rest breaks. Stop any activity that causes pain. Check shoes regularly for wear and tear.

Joint protection helps prevent pain. Rise from chairs by pushing off with your thigh muscles, not your hands or

shoulders. Use both hands to reach for heavy objects overhead. Face objects as you reach for them. Try not to clench tools too hard. Use power tools instead.

During a flare, rest the tendon or bursa and ice it for 10-15 minutes twice a day. Seek medical attention if pain worsens or doesn't improve in a few weeks.

Updated March 2019 by Kwas Huston, MD, and reviewed by the American College of Rheumatology Committee on Communications and Marketing. This information is provided for general education only. Individuals should consult a qualified health care provider for professional medical advice, diagnosis and treatment of a medical or health condition.