BURSITIS & TENDINITIS

WHAT ARE THEY?
Bursitis and Tendinitis are both common conditions that cause swelling around muscles and bones. They occur most often in the shoulder, elbow, wrist, hip, knee or ankle.

A bursa is a small, fluid-filled sac that acts as a cushion between a bone and other moving body parts such as muscles, tendons or skin. Bursae are found throughout the body. Bursitis occurs when a bursa becomes swollen.

A tendon is a flexible band of tissue that connects muscles to bones. Tendons can be small, like those found in the hand or ankle, or large, like the Achilles tendon in the heel. Tendons help create movement by making the muscles push or pull the bones in different ways. Tendinitis is the severe swelling of a tendon.

CAUSES
People get bursitis by overusing a joint. It can also be caused by direct trauma. It usually occurs at the knee or elbow. Kneeling or leaning your elbows on a hard surface for a long time can make bursitis start.

Tendinitis usually occurs after repeated injury to a certain area such as the wrist or ankle. Tendons become less flexible with age and become more prone to damage. Tendinitis causes pain and soreness around a joint. Some common forms of tendinitis are named after the sports that increase their risk: tennis elbow, golfer’s elbow, pitcher’s shoulder, swimmer’s shoulder, and jumper’s knee.

Doing the same kinds of movements every day or putting stress on joints increases the risk for both conditions. People like carpenters, gardeners, musicians, and athletes often get bursitis or tendinitis.

Infection, arthritis, gout, thyroid disease, and diabetes can also cause swelling of a bursa or tendon. Both bursitis and tendinitis are more frequent the older you get.

HOW ARE THESE CONDITIONS DIAGNOSED?
Diagnosis of tendinitis and bursitis begins with a medical history and physical exam. You will describe the pain and when and where the pain occurs. The doctor may ask you whether it gets better or worse during the day. Another important clue is what makes the pain go away or come back.

TREATMENT
Your doctor may inject a drug into the area around the swollen bursa or tendon. If the joint still does not improve after 6 to 12 months, the doctor may perform surgery to repair damage and relieve pressure on the tendons and bursae. If the bursitis is caused by an infection, the doctor will prescribe antibiotics.

If a tendon is completely torn, surgery may be needed to repair the damage. Repairing a tendon tear requires an exercise program to restore the ability to bend and straighten the joint and to strengthen the muscles around it to prevent repeat injury. An exercise program may last six months.

PREVENTION
* Warm up or stretch before exercise
* Strengthen the muscles around the joint
* Take frequent breaks from repetitive tasks
* Cushion the affected joint with foam
* Increase grip on tools with gloves, tape, padding
* Use an oversized grip on golf clubs
* Use a two-handed backhand in tennis
* Use two hands to hold heavy tools.
* Don’t sit still for long periods
* Practice good posture
* Position your body properly in doing daily tasks
* Begin new activities or exercises slowly

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