

Trochanteric bursitis

What is trochanteric bursitis?

A bursa is a fluid-filled sac within a joint that provides cushioning and support. Each hip has two major bursae: the trochanteric bursa (on the outside point of the hip) and the iliopsoas bursa (on the inside of the hip). When a bursa becomes inflamed, this is called bursitis.

Therefore, trochanteric bursitis is inflammation of the trochanteric bursa. This condition is also called greater trochanteric pain syndrome.

The trochanteric bursa may become inflamed from overuse or injury of your hip. It is also caused by posture, gout, muscle tears and it can be a complication of hip surgery.

It's a common problem in middle aged and older people, although any age group can be affected.

What are the symptoms?

Hip pain is the main symptom of trochanteric bursitis. The pain may start on the outside of your hip and be quite sharp. It will usually turn into a dull ache and start to improve over about 2 weeks. Your hip may be tender to touch and in some rare cases will be red and swollen.

What does your doctor look for?

Your doctor will inquire about your medical history, including the duration of your pain and which movements alleviate or aggravate it. They will also conduct a physical examination to assess the mobility and function of your hip.

What investigations are needed?

The bursa doesn't show up on X-ray, but your doctor may request one to rule out other causes of hip pain. You may also be asked to have an ultrasound or MRI, although usually only if your pain isn't improving with treatment.

How is trochanteric bursitis treated?

Trochanteric bursitis is usually treated with:

- non-drug therapy (e.g. ice, rest and physiotherapy, shock-wave therapy)
- injections
- medications (e.g. anti-inflammatories)

Surgery is rarely needed, but if the bursa is damaged beyond repair, it can be removed. This is usually done via arthroscopy (keyhole surgery).