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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

Trochanteric Bursitis

Do you have pain at the side of your hip that may even extend down to the side of your knee? Is it worse at night or when you lie on it? Do you get pain at the outside of your hip when climbing stairs, getting up from a deep chair, or after sitting in a car? Does the pain increase when walking or standing for long periods of time? If you answered yes to some or all of these questions, you may have “trochanteric bursitis”. In this article, I will explain to you what this condition is and how I treat it.

What is a bursa?

Every person has hundreds of “bursa” scattered throughout the body. The function of a bursa is to decrease friction between two surfaces that move in different directions. The bursa can be thought of as a Ziplock bag with a small amount of oil and no air inside. Imagine rubbing this bag between your hands; the movement of your hands would be smooth and effortless. That is what a bursa is supposed to do. It is a smooth, slippery surface between two moving parts of your body. You tend to find a bursa at points where muscles and tendons glide over bones. Without the bursa between these surfaces, movements would be painful.

What is trochanteric bursitis?

In “trochanteric bursitis”, the slippery bursa that rests between the bony prominence at the outside of the hip (the greater trochanter) and the overlying wide tendon (iliotibial band) becomes swollen and inflamed. This normally smooth gliding bursa becomes gritty and rough, while any movement of tendons over the inflamed bursa is painful and irritating.

What causes it?

The most common cause of trochanteric bursitis is when the muscles above the hip become too tight. These tight muscles attach to and pull firmly on the wide tendon that passes over the bony prominence at the side of the hip, squeezing the bursae against the bone. This creates an area of increased friction as the tendon slides repetitively over the bony prominence, irritating the bursa. Trochanteric bursitis may also occur as a

result of direct trauma to the side of the hip and in people who have osteoarthritis of the hips and lower back

How do you diagnose it?

A careful physical examination of your hip and back by a chiropractor will determine if you have trochanteric bursitis. While you are lying on your unaffected side, your chiropractor can carefully examine the greater trochanteric bursa area of the painful side. If you feel tenderness over the bursa when pressure is applied, a diagnosis is confirmed.

How do you treat it?

In my office, I always attempt to correct the cause of the problem, rather than just eliminating the symptoms. Therefore, if the muscles above the affected hip joint are very tight, it only makes sense to stretch and work on them first. In my office, I use specific muscle stretches and the modalities such as “interferential current”. Once these muscles are loosened, the pressure that the wide tendon is putting on the bursa is lessened. If this is achieved, the inflammation in and around the bursa will lessen and the pain will subside. If a person is given non-steroidal antiinflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) or a cortisone injection into the painful bursa, the symptoms will often subside. However, the muscles above the hip will likely remain tight and the problem will simply reoccur when the drugs or injections are no longer being used.

I have also found that applying ice to the bursa may reduce the inflammation. It is recommended that you apply a large ice pack on the affected area for 20 to 30 minutes. You should repeat the ice application twice a day for 2 to 3 days. Weight loss may be recommended if you are overweight. Custom orthotics may also be required to correct any biomechanical problems with the feet that can contribute to hip problems.

If you think you have trochaneric bursitis, the sooner you address it, the better. The prognosis for recovery is very good and most people with trochanteric bursitis respond very well to treatment. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to call my office directly.