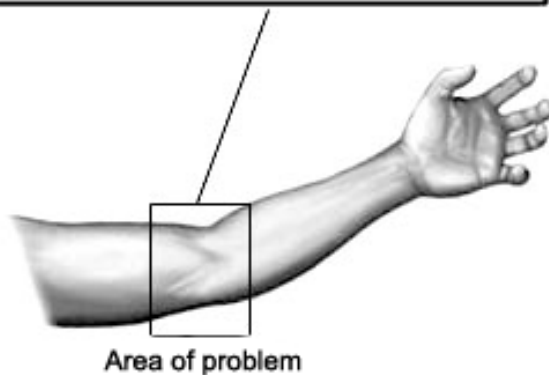
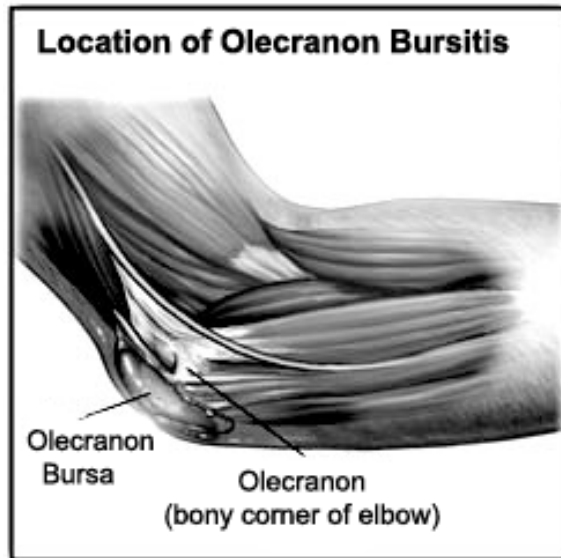


# InfoSheet – Olecranon Bursitis

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## WHAT IS ELBOW (OLECRANON) BURSITIS?

Olecranon bursitis is an inflammatory condition of the elbow. The olecranon is the prominent bony bump on the end of your elbow joint. A small fluid-filled sac called a bursa serves as a cushion between this bone and surrounding skin. Bursae are found throughout the body. When they become irritated, the condition is known as bursitis.



## WHAT CAUSES THE CONDITION?

Olecranon bursitis can be caused by:

- falling on the elbow

- a blow to the elbow by an object or another person
- rubbing the elbow on a desk, armrest, or other rigid surface
- activities that place prolonged pressure on the elbow
- infection
- rheumatoid diseases
- *nothing in particular*

Strangely enough, you may have experienced these conditions many times before without developing a swollen bursa. It's not clear why this chooses to happen when it does.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

You will have some pain and swelling in your elbow. The swelling is usually more prominent than the pain, although it itself may cause elbow movement to be uncomfortable. The skin over the area may feel warm or appear discolored.

## WHAT ARE MY TREATMENT OPTIONS?

Conservative treatment usually includes a period of rest and immobilization. Ice packs may be used 3 to 4 times a day (15 to 20 minutes at a time) to control swelling and pain. Anti-inflammatory medications can provide additional relief. Elevating the affected arm will promote the movement of fluid out of the joint. A compressive wrap, and avoiding leaning on the elbow, are the main treatments for most olecranon bursitis.

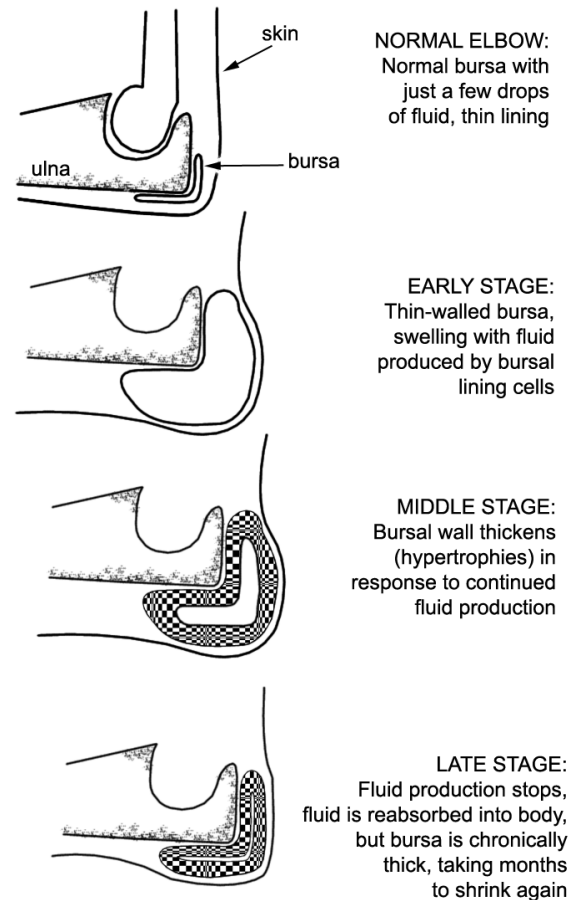
Further treatment may be needed if the condition persists. For diagnostic purposes, if he suspects an infection or other serious condition, your doctor may remove fluid from the bursa with a

needle and syringe, although it will usually re-accumulate. Additionally, this carries a risk of *causing* an infection. A compression bandage may be applied to prevent fluid build-up from returning, and a splint may be used to limit elbow movement. A steroid injection, such as cortisone, may be given for swelling and pain. Surgical removal of the bursa is final option for the most severe cases of olecranon bursitis.

You may be referred for physical or occupational therapy during your rehabilitation. The goal of rehabilitation is to help you return to your regular activities and regain strength and flexibility in your elbow. It is important to follow the instructions given by your doctor and therapist to speed your recovery.

### **HOW LONG IS THE RECOVERY PERIOD?**

Your recovery will vary depending on the extent of your condition. Your age and overall health also impacts your healing. Generally, olecranon bursitis requires about three to six weeks for your elbow to return to your normal state, although some swelling may always be present. Surgery will involve a longer recuperation period.



**Figure: Olecranon Bursitis**

*An overview of the stages, showing what is happening to the bursa as the elbow appears to grow and shrink.*

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