

Bursa Injections

A bursa injection is used to treat pain in the buttocks, hips or upper legs in patients who have bursitis (a swollen and irritated bursa).

A bursa is a small pad that is filled with fluid and acts as a cushion between your bones and your muscles and tendons. Your bursa can become irritated from daily wear and tear or injury, or because your legs are different lengths.

Some patients have an irritated bursa on the outside of their hip bones or under the fold of the buttocks, over the “sit bones.” This can cause pain in the hip, buttock or knee. Sometimes the pain is worse when climbing stairs, running, lying on your side that has the irritated bursa, or sitting for a long time.

During the procedure, the bursa is injected with a mixture of a local anesthetic and a steroid. The local anesthetic will numb the area. The steroid will help reduce the irritation, which should reduce your pain.

How to prepare

Once your procedure is scheduled, we will give you instructions on how to prepare. It is very important for your safety to tell us if you:

- Take a blood thinner (for example, warfarin/Coumadin, Lovenox, or Plavix);
- Take anything that contains aspirin or anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen (for example, Advil or Motrin) or naproxen (for example, Aleve);
- Have a condition that prevents your blood from clotting normally; or
- Have any allergies to latex, local anesthetics or X-ray dye.

Some patients will have another procedure on the same day they receive their bursa injection. These patients must have someone drive them home after the procedures. If they do not, their procedures may be canceled. We will let you know if this applies to you.

Does the procedure hurt?

You may feel some stinging from the needle. You may also feel some pressure or an ache when your doctor injects the medications into your bursa.

What to expect

A bursa injection generally involves these steps:

1. You will be taken to a patient waiting area. There we will check your ID band, measure your vital signs (such as your blood pressure and pulse), and ask you some basic questions about your health.
2. Then you will be taken to the procedure room where your doctor will ask your consent to do the procedure.
3. You will lie on a table, on your side that does not hurt. Then the skin over the area to be treated will be cleaned and covered with a special sheet. This will help keep the area free of germs.
4. Your doctor may feel the area to find the most painful spot. Then he or she may numb the skin with a local anesthetic. This can help prevent discomfort during the procedure.

5. Then your doctor will inject the numbing medication and the steroid medication into your bursa, at the most painful spot.

Throughout the procedure, your doctor may use a special X-ray machine to help view the area to be treated. He or she may also inject a substance called contrast, which will highlight the area. If you are allergic to contrast, your doctor will discuss your options with you before the test.

The entire procedure takes about 5 minutes. You will be awake during the procedure and may ask questions at any time. Before you leave, we will give you instructions on how to care for yourself at home.

Possible side effects

A bursa injection is generally a safe procedure. The most common side effect after the bursa injection is soreness where you were injected. There is also a risk that your leg might feel numb for a short while from the local anesthetic.

After the procedure

- You may feel relief from your pain right away because of the local anesthetic. But, the local anesthetic will wear off 2–3 hours after the bursa injection. At that point, your pain may return.
- You may have longer pain relief once the steroid medication starts to work. This could take up to 2 weeks after the procedure. You should keep taking your regular pain medication if needed after the procedure.
- The pain relief from a bursa injection usually lasts for several months (though this differs from patient to patient.)
- Bursa injections work better in some people than in others. If you do not have any relief or if your pain gets worse, we will work with you to find the source of your pain and explore other treatment options.

If you have any questions, please call the Spine Center at 617-754-5246 and select option 2.