



Trochanteric Bursitis

What is it?

The muscles that surround the hips have a lot of work to do. They have to keep the pelvis level and control one of the most flexible joints of the body. They are organized in layers, and the deeper muscles are separated from the outer muscles by sheets of connective tissue, to allow easy gliding, as they interact with each other.

There's a lot going on, and certain points in the body are more prone to experiencing tension and friction during movement. To deal with this your body is scattered with tiny sacs of fluid, which release a natural lubricant. These sacs are called Bursa.

They are actually found all over the body and usually are quite inconspicuous, which is why most people have never heard of them. However, occasionally something goes wrong and they become irritated and painful. This will usually happen in a few typical places in the body and one of them this over the greater trochanter, the bony part of the outer hip.

What are the symptoms?

If you're unlucky enough to have trochanteric bursitis you'll experience a sharp, superficial pain on the outside of your hip, which may radiate down to the knee. You can experience pain with a number of activities such as walking, jogging, climbing stairs and cycling or simply lying on the affected side.

How does it happen?

The most common cause for this is a combination of poor biomechanics and overuse. We talk about biomechanics a lot, but to refresh your memory it's the way your body parts, muscles, bones, nerves and joints interact with each other. If you have great posture, control and strength everything moves smoothly. When you have poor biomechanics, some structures have to work harder to compensate and are put under more stress, potentially leading to irritation.

Some things that contribute to poor biomechanics around the hip are weak, uncontrolled muscles, tight muscles, flat feet with unsupportive footwear, difference in leg length, incorrect equipment settings and scoliosis. These can all lead to irritation of the bursa around the hip.

How can Physiotherapy help?

As there are many other conditions that can cause pain at the outer hip, correct diagnosis is essential. Once diagnosis is confirmed, the first phase of treatment is to reduce pain and irritation.

This can be done with muscle release techniques, ice application, rest, fitting you with orthotics and even providing crutches in some cases. Your physiotherapist will also evaluate the causes of the irritation and prescribe a suitable rehabilitation program to change your biomechanics.

Serious cases can be treated with corticosteroid injection or even surgery, but with thorough physiotherapy treatment you can usually get back into action within 6 weeks.

