Trochanteric bursitis

What is Trochanteric bursitis?

A bursa is a fluid-filled sac which provides a slippery surface between adjacent tissues to allow them to slide over each other without friction. A problem occurs when the bursa itself becomes inflamed. When this happens it loses its gliding capabilities and becomes more irritated when it is moved. Trochanteric bursitis refers to inflammation of the bursa which is situated at the outside of the hip, the greater trochanter, and between the overlying iliotibial band (ITB) and gluteal muscles. Trochanteric bursitis is the most common type of hip pain.

What causes Trochanteric bursitis?

The trochanteric bursa may become inflamed for different reasons. Most cases appear gradually with no obvious injury or cause.

Trochanteric bursitis can occur after having hip replacement surgery. This may be due to a combination of changes in the way the hip works, the way it is aligned or the way scar tissue has formed from the incision.

A fall on the outside of the hip can cause direct trauma, not only making the bursa inflamed, but sometimes causing bleeding into the bursa and forming a hematoma.

Activities that cause overuse of the area such as running upstairs, climbing or standing for long periods of time can lead to irritation of the bursa.

Incorrect posture or poor boney alignment can lead to stress on the surrounding tissues and to inflammation of the bursa.

Rarely there can be a bone spur or calcium deposit in the tendons that attach to the trochanter.
Usual symptoms include:

- Pain on the lateral aspect of the hip over the greater trochanter. It may even be warm to touch.
- Pain may radiate down the side of the thigh to the knee.
- Pain when bending the hip up or taking it out to the side.
- Pain aggravated by activities such as walking, running, stair climbing or crossing your legs.

What can physiotherapy do to help?

- We assess your condition and find the cause of the irritation.
- We use pain modalities such as ultrasound, interferential and acupuncture to relieve pain and inflammation and to promote healing.
- We assess for any muscle imbalances and give appropriate corrective exercises.
- We advise you on how to manage your pain and activity modification.
- We may suggest rest from activities that are causing the pain to prevent further friction of the bursa.

Sport Medicine Physician

If physiotherapy does not relieve the bursitis your sports medicine physician may choose to prescribe anti-inflammatory medication for you.

If the bursitis is severe and not responding to treatment another option is an injection of cortico-steroids into the bursa itself. This acts as a strong anti-inflammatory and may help to reduce the swelling and pain.

Sometimes it is hard to tell whether the pain is coming from the trochanteric bursitis or the hip. If this is the case, the doctor may order x-rays to get more information.