

# Bakers Cyst

May 2006



## What is a Bakers cyst?

A Bakers cyst (also known as a popliteal cyst) is the result of a problem with your knee joint, such as arthritis or a cartilage tear, which causes your knee to produce too much fluid.

## What are the symptoms of a Bakers cyst?

In some cases a Bakers cyst causes no pain and so remains unnoticed. The common symptoms of a Bakers cyst are:

- swelling behind the knee
- knee pain
- tightness in the back of the knee
- knee stiffness

## What causes a Bakers cyst?

A valve-like system exists between the knee joint and the bursae (tissue pouches) on the back of the knee, which regulates the amount of synovial fluid (thick fluid found in cavities of joints that reduces friction and lubricates movement) coming in and out of the bursae. When the knee produces too much synovial fluid (this happens when the knee is swollen) the excess fluid causes the bursae behind the knee to bulge and expand – this is what is known as a Bakers cyst.

## How is a Bakers cyst treated?

If the Bakers cyst is large and causes a lot of pain, doctors may drain the fluid from the knee joint using a needle. Alternatively, your doctor can also inject a corticosteroid into the knee to reduce the volume of synovial fluid being produced. This will relieve the pain but will not prevent the reoccurrence of a Bakers cyst.

Your doctor will normally treat the underlying causes of the cyst as well as the Bakers cyst itself. If you have a sports injury, such as a cartilage tear, which causes the increase in synovial fluid, then the torn cartilage may be removed.

If the underlying cause of the Bakers cyst is arthritis, then your doctor will advise you on how to ensure that you are not producing too much synovial fluid.

## Can a Bakers cyst burst?

Rarely, a cyst may burst and leak synovial fluid into the calf region. If this happens there will be a sharp pain in the knee, swelling and sometimes redness of the calf. These symptoms closely resemble those of a blood clot in the leg, therefore, if these symptoms occur, a prompt medical evaluation will be needed.

## Note

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## Arthritis Care

Arthritis Care is the UK's largest voluntary organisation working with and for all people with arthritis.



Our publications are just one of the many services Arthritis Care provides. These include a confidential helpline, self-management and awareness training, information for people with arthritis and health professionals, and local activity and support. We also campaign locally and nationally to help change attitudes and laws and to ensure people with arthritis have access to the treatments and services they need and deserve.

## Contact us

For confidential information and support, contact the Arthritis Care Helpline

**Freephone: 0808 800 4050**

10am-4pm (weekdays)

Email: [Helplines@arthritiscare.org.uk](mailto:Helplines@arthritiscare.org.uk)

For information about Arthritis Care and the services we offer, contact us at:

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