Olecranon Bursitis

What is it?

Bursas are thin sacs that are found in areas of the body that need cushioning between bones and other tissues. They have a little fluid in them to help with friction. In the elbow, the olecranon bursa cushions the olecranon bone, pointy bone of the elbow, from the skin. A healthy bursa is flat, but as it is irritated or infected, it enlarges with fluid. This can be caused by direct injury, prolonged pressure, infection, or other medical conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and gout.

Symptoms:

- Painful elbow
- Swollen point of elbow
- Decreased range of motion in extreme cases
- Red and warm skin of the swollen area

How is it diagnosed?

Upon clinical evaluation involving check of range of motion and physical exam, an x-ray will help to determine if there are any bony problems contributing to the irritation. In cases where infection or gout is suspected, samples may be taken with a needle for further lab examination.

Treatment:

Non-operative Treatment:

- Aspirations - draining the fluid from the bursa
- Antibiotics
- Elbow pads for extra cushioning
- Activity modifications
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications
- Corticosteroid injections

**Surgical Treatment**

If conservative treatment fails, a surgical procedure may be recommended that involves removing the entire bursa. Post-operatively you may be required to take antibiotics for a period of time if the bursa was infected. You will perform some simple elbow exercises to regain range of motion. Your bursa will grow back over a period of time, but will not be inflamed.