

# Baker's cyst

Department of DVT clinic

Information for Patients

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## What is a Baker's cyst?

A Baker's cyst is a swelling that can develop behind the knee. It is filled with fluid that is normally found inside the knee joint. If this fluid leaks out it can turn into a cyst.

It is named after a doctor called William Baker who first described the condition in 1877.

The cyst can be small or large. Sometimes it can be several centimetres.

## What causes a Baker's cyst?

Most of the time a Baker's cyst will develop if you have another problem with your knee. For example arthritis or a tear in the cartilage that lines the inside of the knee joint. When this happens the knee joint produces too much fluid. This causes the pressure inside the knee to increase. This then stretches the joint capsule. The joint capsule bulges into the back of the knee, forming the Baker's cyst that is filled with fluid.

You are more likely to get a Baker's cyst if you have:

- Arthritis (Osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis and gout)
- Meniscus tear
- Torn ligament in your knee
- Infection of the knee joint

## What are the symptoms?

Some people may not have any symptoms. The cyst may be found when you are having an ultrasound scan on your knee. The larger the cyst is the more likely it will cause symptoms, such as:

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- Pain and/or swelling behind the knee
- Difficulty in bending the knee
- Swelling of the calf
- Slight redness of the calf

## How is it diagnosed?

When a doctor looks at your knee, the area behind may be swollen. An ultrasound scan is the best way to check for Baker's cyst. They may also be spotted on an MRI scan.

## What are the complications?

The most common complication is when the cyst splits open (ruptures). This is more likely to cause swelling of the calf. If the fluid leaks it will also cause itching and redness.

## What is the treatment?

It is important to address the underlying knee problem when you have Baker's cyst. There is no actual treatment to get rid of the cyst. We can just help to relieve symptoms. These include:

- Simple painkillers such as Paracetamol and NSAID for example Ibuprofen which comes in tablet and gel form.
- Stronger pain relief may be needed in severe cases. Your doctor can prescribe this.
- Physiotherapy. This may include heat or ice treatment and exercises to stretch and maintain the mobility and strength of your knee.
- Steroid injection
- Surgical intervention in extreme cases.

## Contact details

If you have any questions please contact the department on 0116 2585972

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