

## Baker's Cyst

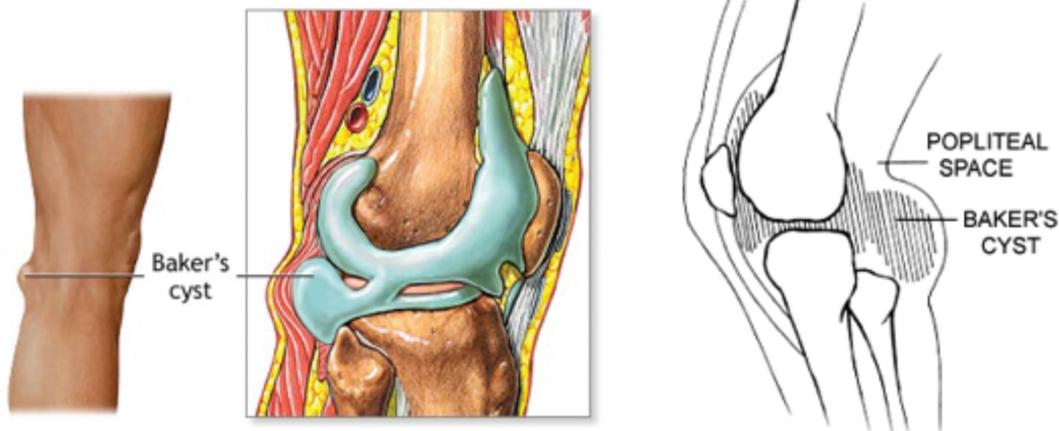
### What is a Baker's Cyst ("Popliteal Cyst")?

A Baker's Cyst, also referred to as a "popliteal cyst," is a small benign (non-cancerous) cyst that forms on the back of the knee joint. A cyst is a small sac filled with clear, thick fluid. It may range somewhat in size, but will generally not cause a great deal of pain or discomfort.

### Causes of Baker's Cyst

A Baker's Cyst is the result of synovial fluid, which lines and lubricates the knee joint, escaping from the joint capsule. They are more common in people suffering from degenerative joint disease or osteoarthritis.

A Baker's Cyst may also be the result of an injury, inflammation of the knee joint or a chronic knee problem other than degenerative joint disease.



### Symptoms of a Baker's Cyst

The cyst can be felt as a small swelling on the back of the knee. It may be tender to the touch. The knee may also be stiff, though in adults it may accompany a flare-up of rheumatoid arthritis or osteoarthritis. Symptoms of the cyst may not be distinguishable from those of arthritis.

It can also occur in children, ages five to seven years old. In those cases, these cysts are usually not indicative of any other knee problems. They usually disappear after the child grows up.

Swelling may increase, limiting activities such as kneeling, when the knee is bent. Baker's Cysts are typically not very painful unless the swelling is severe.

## Treatment of Baker's Cyst

Dr. Gudeman may take X-rays of your knee to rule out other potential, more serious problems. However, the cyst will not show up on an X-ray. Other tests such as an ultrasound or MRI may be necessary to confirm the diagnosis of a Baker's Cyst.

Treatment is often not necessary, except to continue to observe the cyst to be sure that it does not continue to grow larger. Normally the cyst will go away by itself.

Ice and/or wrapping your knee with an elastic bandage may be helpful in reducing the swelling and pain in your knee.

If necessary, Dr. Gudeman may have to drain the fluid from your knee with a needle. This is called aspiration. It may only provide temporary relief. The cyst may still reappear after the aspiration.

Baker's cysts generally disappear within a few years. Surgery is rarely required, unless the cyst grows quite large and/or interferes with movement. A cyst may actually rupture, causing temporary swelling and pain in the calf.

There are generally no complications associated with Baker's cysts. However, if your knee becomes increasingly painful or if it is warm or red or you develop a fever, contact Dr. Gudeman or his staff. This may indicate that you have developed an infection.

For some adults, a knee meniscal tear may be associated and cause a Baker's cyst. If the meniscal tear is causing pain and problems, arthroscopy to treat the meniscal tear may be indicated. Usually, surgical treatment of the Baker's cyst in this setting is not necessary. Surgical treatment of the meniscal tear indirectly addresses the Baker's cyst.

## Informative Websites

[www.saveyourknees.org](http://www.saveyourknees.org)  
[www.orthoinfo.org](http://www.orthoinfo.org)  
[www.sportsmed.org](http://www.sportsmed.org)  
[www.aana.org](http://www.aana.org)



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- Scott Gudeman, MD