

## Lateral knee pain - Is it Illiotibial Band Syndrome?

### **What is Illio-tibial Band Syndrome?**

Illio-tibial band syndrome can often be referred to by other names, such as runner's knee and Illio-tibial band friction syndrome.

The Illio-tibial band is a sheath of thick, fibrous connective tissue that starts at the top of the hip bone and runs down the outside of the thigh, where it attaches to the outer surface of the shin bone (Tibia).

Its primary function is to extend the knee joint (straighten it) but is also able to abduct the hip (move it out sideways).

As the ITB passes over the lateral epicondyle of the femur (bony prominence on the outside of the knee) it is prone to friction. When the knee straightens, the ITB flicks in front of the epicondyle and when it is bent, it flicks back behind. This occurs at an angle of approximately 20-30 degrees which is why this type of injury is common in runners.

### **Symptoms experienced:**

An ache and/or sharp pain over the lateral aspect of the knee, usually aggravated by running.

Often the pain can start at the same distance/time into each run. Down hill and longer runs are particularly aggravating.

Tightness and/or tenderness in the Illio-tibial band

### **Causes:**

The friction experienced over the lateral aspect of the knee can be significantly increased due to tightness of the ITB.

Tightness can be caused by inappropriate training and abnormal biomechanics.

Certain factors may make you more susceptible to developing Illio-tibial band syndrome:

- A naturally tight or wide IT band
- Weak hip muscles such as gluteus medius
- Trigger points within the IT band and gluteal muscles
- Overpronation
- Overuse
- Excessive hill running

- Running on a cambered surface
- Leg length difference

Most of these factors can be addressed through changes to your training programme, the use of insoles or heel pads and a thorough rehabilitation programme.

Ilio-tibial band friction syndrome may require long-term rehabilitation and frequent Ilio-tibial band stretches should be maintained even after symptoms cease.

#### **Self treatment includes:**

Rest.

Avoid painful activities, for example downhill running.

Apply cold therapy or ice to reduce any inflammation.

Stretch the Ilio-tibial band after training.

Self massage techniques can also be very helpful in correcting excessive ITB tightness.

If none of the above improves symptoms it is worth seeing a sports injury specialist

#### **A sports injury specialist or clinician may:**

- Perform soft tissue or deep friction massage.
- Use Myofascial release techniques which have been shown to be highly effective.
- Perform cupping techniques.
- Use electrotherapeutic treatment techniques such as TENS or ultrasound to reduce pain and inflammation.
- Outline a rehabilitation strategy which may include stretches and exercises to strengthen the hip abductors.

For information on rehabilitation, get in touch with the Sports Specialist via email at [info@the-fitness-specialist.co.uk](mailto:info@the-fitness-specialist.co.uk)