

What is Iliotibial (IT) Band Friction Syndrome?

IT Band Friction Syndrome

IT Band Friction Syndrome happens when the iliotibial (IT) band — a thick band of tissue on the outside of your leg — rubs too much against the bone near your knee. This rubbing can cause pain on the outside of your knee, especially during activities like running or biking.

It's a common problem for people who do a lot of sports with lots of knee bending and straightening, like:

- Running
- Biking
- Other sports with lots of leg movement

This condition is one of the more common overuse injuries in the knee area — especially in athletes who train often.

Risk Factors

There are a few reasons someone might be more likely to get IT Band Syndrome. These reasons usually fall into three groups:

1. How You Train

- Jumping into harder or longer workouts too quickly
- Wearing old or unsupportive shoes
- Increasing your workout intensity too quickly

2. How Your Body Is Built (Anatomy)

- Hyperextension — Knees that bend backward or
- Genu varum — Knees that bend outward
- Leg length discrepancy — One leg being a little longer than the other
- Foot pronation — Feet that roll in too much when you walk or run
- Pes Planus — Also called "flat feet," this is when the arches on the inside of the feet are low or not visible when standing
- Weak hip muscles or atrophy
- A tight IT band

3. How Your Body Moves (Biomechanics)

- Big differences in strength between the front and back of your thigh muscles
- Landing too hard when running or jumping
- Knees bent too much when your heel hits the ground during running

Understanding these risks can help you and your care team make a plan to keep your legs healthy!

Signs and Symptoms

If you have IT Band Friction Syndrome, you might feel pain on the outside part of your knee. The pain can get worse if you run more than usual or run on hills or uneven ground. Usually, the pain gets better when you rest.



Physical Exam

When you see your healthcare provider, they will check your leg to find out what's causing your pain.

They might notice:

- Some swelling on the outside of your thigh (where the IT band is)
- That your foot or knee doesn't line up quite right
- A sore spot on the side of your knee when they press there
- A grating, popping, or creaking sound when you move your knee (this is called "crepitus")
- That your hip or knee doesn't move as well as it should
- Weakness when you try to move your leg out to the side
- Pain when you do a single-leg squat

To help figure out what's going on, your doctor might order an X-ray or an MRI to get a closer look inside your leg and rule out other possible causes of your symptoms.

Treatment

Your healthcare provider may recommend one or a combination of the following conservative treatment measures:

- Rest
- Ice
- Oral or topical non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications
 - Topical: diclofenac (Voltaren)
 - Oral: ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Aleve)
- Corticosteroid injections
- Home exercise program
- Physical therapy
- Training modifications
 - Changing shoes every 300-500 miles
 - Avoiding sudden increases in intensity or duration

50-90% of patients will improve with 4-8 weeks of conservative treatment!



Rarely do patients require surgical intervention for IT band syndrome.

Your healthcare provider will prepare the best plan of care to meet your goals.

Injury Prevention

Can iliotibial band syndrome be prevented?

Yes – in some cases, IT band syndrome can be prevented!

Here are some tips to help keep your legs feeling great and avoid problems with your IT band:

- Try to run or play on flat, even ground
- Get new running shoes when your old ones wear out
- Don't do too much too fast – give your body time to rest
- If you run on a track, switch directions sometimes
- Have a coach, athletic trainer, or personal trainer check how you run and move during sports
- Stretch the sides of your legs and the backs of your thighs (hamstrings) often

If you're just starting a new sport or activity, begin slowly and increase your time little by little.

You can also ask your doctor, coach, or school's athletic trainer for more tips to stay safe and active!



For more information regarding IT Band Syndrome, visit:



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