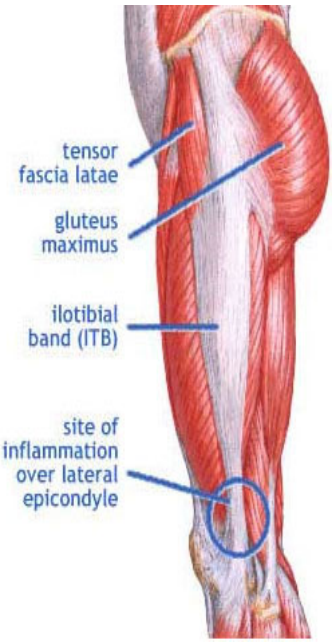
A Patient's Guide to Iliotibial Band Syndrome

What is Iliotibial Band Syndrome?

Iliotibial Band (ITB) Syndrome is an overuse problem that is often seen in bicyclists, runners and long-distance walkers. The ITB becomes tightened creating a lack of sliding motion between the ITB and the muscles in the leg. This causes inflammation and pain on the outside of the knee just above the joint. It can be very bothersome and the discomfort may keep athletes and active people from participating in the activities they enjoy.

What is the ITB, and what does it do?

The ITB is actually a long *tendon* (tendons connect muscles to bone). It attaches to a short muscle at the top of the pelvis called the *tensor fascia lata*. The ITB runs down the side of the thigh and connects to the outside edge of the *tibia* (shinbone) just below the middle of the knee joint. The ITB crosses over the outside of the knee joint, giving added stability to the knee. When the knee is bent and straightened, the tendon glides across the edge of the femoral condyle. A bursa (a fluid filled sack) rests between the femoral condyle and the ITB. Normally, this bursa allows the tendon to glide smoothly back and forth over the edge of the femoral condyle as the knee bends and straightens. With ITB Syndrome, this gliding does not occur properly and pain develops.



How does ITB Syndrome develop?

People often develop ITB Syndrome from an overuse or repetitive activity such as running, walking or biking. Poor biomechanics cause increased stress, internal pressure and increased friction that leads to inflammation and eventually the formation of scar tissue within the ITB. Scar tissue restricts the movement of adjacent tissues, causing friction. Normally, ITB glides smoothly back and forth over the lateral femoral condyle as the knee bends and straightens. However, as the scar tissue builds up and motion is reduced, the bursa between the lateral femoral condyle and the ITB can become irritated and inflamed. The ITB starts to snap over the condyle with repeated knee motions and pain is produced. It has also been found that people with a weakened or fatigued *gluteus medius* muscle in the hip are more likely to end up with ITB syndrome. This muscle controls outward movements of the hip. If the gluteus medius isn't working properly, the thigh tends to shift inward. This increases the knee angle, putting more stress on the lateral knee. The ITB becomes tightened against the bursa on the outside of the knee, causing inflammation and pain.

What does ITB Syndrome feel like?

The symptoms of ITB Syndrome commonly begin with pain over the outside of the knee, just above the knee joint. Tenderness in this area is usually worse after activity. As the inflammation progresses, pain may radiate up the side of the thigh and down the side of the leg. Patients also report a snapping or popping sensation on the outside of the knee.

What is the treatment for ITB Syndrome?

In our office, we use a combination of chiropractic treatments, Active Release Technique (ART) soft tissue manipulation and rehabilitation to allow restoration of proper biomechanics to the hips, knees and ankles.

Ways We Treat Your ITB Syndrome:

Chiropractic

- Chiropractic is a natural healing approach that promotes a healthy, pain-free lifestyle without the use of drugs or surgery. An adjustment is a hands-on therapy that delivers a controlled pressure that restores proper motion to a restricted joint.

Active Release Technique (ART)

- ART is a manual therapy that corrects muscular and soft-tissue problems caused by the formation of adhesive or scar tissues. Adhesions/scar tissue occur naturally in the body in response to overuse or cumulative trauma.

Flexibility

- Good flexibility enables muscles and joints to move through their full range of motion. Poor flexibility leads to a higher chance of injury to muscles, tendons and ligaments.

Strength

- Strength training is essential for the rehabilitation of any injury. When new tissue is laid down to repair an area, it is very thin and weak. If this tissue is not properly re-strengthened, it can lead to re-injury.

Proprioception

- Proprioception describes the body's ability to react appropriately to external forces. It also helps rebuild proper motor patterns of the body. Proprioceptive exercises form the basis for the agility, strength, and endurance for complete rehabilitation.

With our combination of different treatments, resolution can be seen in over 90 percent of ITB Syndrome cases. Effective treatment of the hip and leg, or any soft tissue injury, requires an alteration in tissue structure to break up the restrictive cross-fiber adhesions and restore normal function to the affected soft tissue areas. When executed properly, this process substantially decreases healing time, treats the root cause of the injury, and improves athletic performance. Active Chiropractic and Rehabilitation Clinic is very successful at treating this type of injury. Our therapies remove restrictive adhesions between both the superficial and deep tissue structures along the entire kinetic chain. This comprehensive approach creates a complete, time efficient healing process.

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