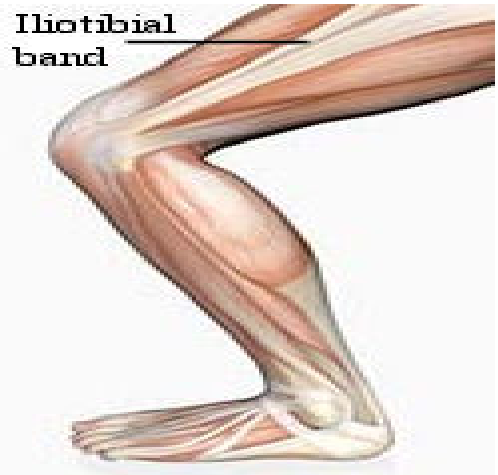
Iliotibial Band Syndrome

The Iliotibial band syndrome is pain in the outside upper thigh. The pain is due to an inflammation (soreness) of the iliotibial band. This is a band of thick fibrous tissue that runs down the outside of the thigh. The iliotibial band begins at the hip. It extends to the outer side of the shin bone (*tibia*) just below the knee joint. The band works with the thigh muscles. Together they provide stability to the outside of the knee joint.



Iliotibial band syndrome (ITBS) occurs when there is inflammation to this band of tissue. The irritation usually occurs over the outside of the knee joint, at the *lateral epicondyle* (the end of the femur bone.) The iliotibial band crosses bone and muscle at this point. Between these structures is a *bursa* (a cushioning sac). The bursa should make possible a smooth gliding motion. However, when inflamed, the iliotibial band does not glide easily. When inflamed, there is pain with motion of the knee. Usually the pain worsens with continued movement. Usually, the pain goes away with rest.

This problem usually arises when there is a sudden increase in sports activities involving the *lower extremities* (your legs). Runners, soccer players and basketball players are examples of activities causing this. Others who are prone to ITBS include individuals with mechanical problems such as leg length differences, abnormality of walking, bowed legs etc.

This *diagnosis* (learning what is wrong) is made by examination. X-rays are usually normal if only soft tissue inflammation is present.

Treatment of ITBS begins with proper footwear, icing the area of pain, stretching, and resting for a period of time. Incorporating low-impact cross-training activities may also help. Your caregiver may prescribe anti-inflammatory medications as well.
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HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Apply ice to the sore area for 10 to 20 minutes, 3 to 4 times per day. Put the ice in a plastic bag and place a towel between the bag of ice and your skin.
- Limit excessive training or eliminate training until pain goes away.
- While pain is present, you may use a gentle range of motion. Do not resume use until instructed by your caregiver. Begin use gradually. Do not increase use to the point of pain. If pain does develop, decrease use and continue the above measures. Gradually increase activities that do not cause discomfort. Do this until you finally achieve normal use.
- Perform low impact activities while pain is present. Wear proper footwear.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your pain increases or pain is not controlled with medications.
- You develop new, unexplained *symptoms* (problems), or an increase of the symptoms that brought you to your caregiver.

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