

## Outer Knee Pain

**Question:** The outside of my knee hurts when I exercise. This happens when I run or ride my bike. Often my hip hurts as well. What could this be?

There is a good chance you have iliotibial band syndrome (ITBS).

The iliotibial band is a large, long fibrous band that starts from the outer portion of your hip called the ilium. This runs along the outside of your leg below your knee, attaching to the top of the tibia.

It mimics the stripe on tuxedo pants, but much wider.

Two muscles attach to the top portion of this band. The tensor fascia lata and the gluteus maximus muscle tighten the iliotibial band supporting the outer knee. They also cause pain to hip.

When you bend your knee past 30 degrees, the lower portion of the ITB rub across the shin bone (tibia) and cause irritation. This accounts for your knee pain along the outer portion.

Usually, ITBS is not painful until you have exercised for a period of time. Often, it will start to hurt after a mile or two of walking or running. If you rest, the pain will stop or lessen.

In addition to hip and knee pain, it is not unusual to have pain along the outer thigh, especially with pressure.

Risk factors for ITBS include foot pronation, unstable knees, lack of flexibility, leg length inequality, sacroiliac/pelvic misalignment.

Training techniques can also cause ITB. If you always walk or run on a sloped street, this puts stress on the downward ITB. Always running in one direction on a track stresses the outer ITB.

Lastly, if you increase your workout too quickly or it becomes too strenuous, you are at risk.

To treat ITBS, you must first reduce inflammation. Ice treatments, ultrasound, electrical muscle stimulation and medication achieve this.

You must stretch. To stretch your right ITB, stand and cross your legs with the right behind the left. Now push your right hip outward, trying to form a "C" with your body. Hold for 30 seconds and stretch both sides.

Lastly, strengthen the ITB by standing on a small stool. For example, if the right ITB is painful, stand on your right foot. Now drop your left hip downward, rocking the hips up and down.

As you progress, you can now drop your left hip down and bend your right knee 20 degrees. This takes some practice and balance. Repeat up to 25 times each leg.

If you are unable to self-treat with ice, stretching and strengthening, get an evaluation of your lower body from the hips to the feet. Chiropractors, physical therapists and sports medicine doctors are all possible avenues of care.

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