

Iliotibial Band Friction Syndrome

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What is it?

Iliotibial Band Friction Syndrome of the knee is a common overuse injury which presents as pain located along the outside of the knee, usually just above the joint. The iliotibial band is a broad tendon that runs from the pelvis to the tibia (shin bone) and helps support the leg in walking and running. Friction from constant rubbing of this tendon along the bones of the knee may produce a burning pain or ache along the side of the knee. Bursitis of the underlying supportive cushion may also be associated with this condition.

How does it present?

Iliotibial Band Friction Syndrome of the knee generally presents as gradual onset of lateral knee pain. Pain is worse with activity such as running, cycling and descending stairs. There may be associated painful snapping or popping felt on the outside of the knee. This syndrome is common among runners.

How do we evaluate it?

Evaluation of iliotibial band friction syndrome is based on history and physical exam. Tenderness may be present along the distal (lower) iliotibial band. Restriction or tightness may also be appreciated. Sometimes, a snapping sensation can be palpated by the examiner or felt by the patient as the band glides along the bones of the knee.

Treatment?

Treatment includes ice, NSAIDS (anti-inflammatory medications), and relative rest or modification of training activities, especially running or hill training. Stretching and strengthening is a mainstay of treatment and often guided through physical therapy. Manual therapy may also be effective to help in recovery. Despite these treatments it may still take weeks to months to improve and GRADUAL return to activity is imperative.