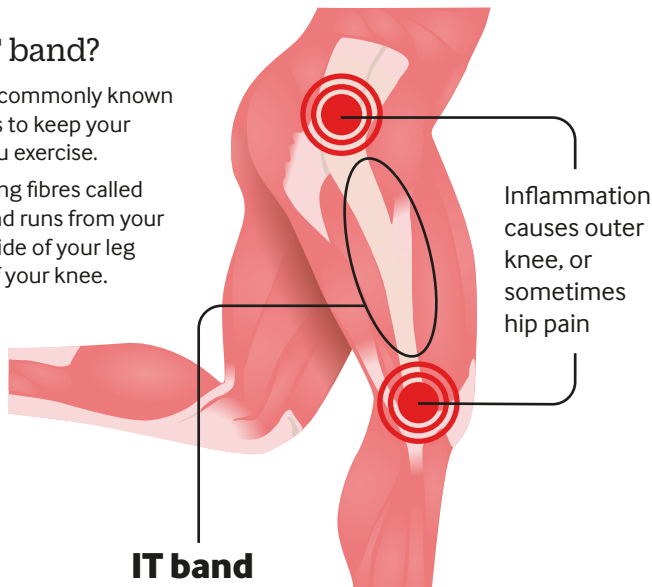


What is the IT band?

The **iliotibial band** (commonly known as the **IT band**) helps to keep your knee stable when you exercise.

It is made out of strong fibres called connective tissue, and runs from your pelvis down the outside of your leg into the outer part of your knee.



Using this leaflet

Your GP or physiotherapist can usually diagnose **IT band syndrome** based on your symptoms, pattern of exercise and an examination.

They may give you this leaflet to help you understand more about your iliotibial band, and what you can do to relieve your symptoms.

Why does IT band syndrome happen?

The **IT band** moves as you bend your knee during exercise. It can start to rub on the outer part of the knee causing pain if:










your **IT band** is tight

you have an uneven running style

you participate in particular activities, such as long distance running

your hip muscles are weak

IT band syndrome is common for people who do sports including:

-  **Running**
-  **Cycling**
-  **Jumping activities**
-  **Field sports**
-  **Hockey**
-  **Rowing**
-  **Breast stroke**
-  **Hiking**
-  **Basketball**

Around 7-14% of runners get **IT band syndrome**

What symptoms does it cause?

IT band syndrome causes pain around the outside of the knee when running or doing exercise. The pain often:

starts when you begin to exercise more, or are training for an event like a marathon

occurs at the same distance each time

gets worse if you continue to exercise, particularly if you are running downhill

Suggested treatment for IT band syndrome

Modify activities

 6 weeks

Consider reducing or changing activities for up to six weeks, to allow the inflammation to settle



You might need to modify activities for more or less than 6 weeks, depending on how bad your symptoms are



Try activities that don't aggravate the pain, such as swimming, yoga, walking, or similar

Make sure to stretch



Improving strength around the hip is important to reduce the forces on the **IT band**. A physiotherapist may recommend using an elasticated band placed around the ankles and then performing leg movements. Lifting the leg sideways as shown 10 times, repeated 3-4 times a day, can improve pelvic muscle strength.



Start doing regular stretches:

- Stand upright and cross your affected leg behind your unaffected leg
- Lean away from the painful side until you feel a stretch and hold this position for 30 seconds
- Repeat this 4 more times
- Do these 3 times a day and continue until symptoms resolve

Gradually restart activities

As the pain allows, restart activities with reduced frequency and distance



Try short sprints, which may avoid the repetitive irritation that occurs on longer runs



Applying ice after a run, and simple painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen can be helpful



Avoid running on angled circuits, hard surfaces, and downhill





Poorly fitting or inadequately padded footwear can make the condition worse so changing your footwear could be helpful



Different footwear can be bought to correct foot posture and running style. Specialist assessment on a treadmill may help choose a better fitting shoe. This can also be assessed in some running shops

What happens if it doesn't get better or happens again?

 About half of people can return to sport by 8 weeks

 This rises to 9 out of 10 at 6 months

If the advice in this leaflet doesn't help, your GP may refer you to a specialist physiotherapist, sports medicine specialist or orthopaedic surgeon. There may be an underlying problem, such as a muscle imbalance, running technique or biomechanical issue

Evidence quality: low

There is not much good quality research about **IT band syndrome**, so this advice is mostly based on expert opinion