



Running INJURIES EXPLAINED

In the second part of our series, we look at a very common runner's problem, ITB syndrome

THIS MONTH'S EXPERT

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ILIOTIBIAL BAND (ITB) SYNDROME

The iliotibial band (ITB) is a group of connective tissue fibres that run along the outside of the thigh. It begins at the hip and extends down the thigh to the outer side of the shin-bone (tibia) just below the knee. Iliotibial band syndrome is caused by inflammation – the muscular portion of the ITB acts as a stabiliser of the hip during running and may become irritated from overuse at the knee or the hip. Pain is generally felt on the outside of the knee or lower thigh, and is often more intense when descending stairs, or getting up from a seated position. Management of this condition will differ depending on where you feel your symptoms. The ITB is aggravated by: running, walking downstairs and moving from sit to stand. It can usually be eased by ice and anti-inflammatories.

THE CAUSES

The most common anatomical and training errors which lead to ITB problems are: overuse; only running and not cross training; faulty biomechanics; running only on one side of a crowned road or track; excessive pronation of the foot; leg length discrepancy; weak gluteal muscles (bum muscles); "bowed" legs; and muscle tightness or lack of flexibility.

THE TREATMENT

ITB syndrome is best managed by prevention and maintaining good flexibility and strength. If you have the symptoms of ITB syndrome start with the early management tips below:

RICE – Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation; avoid overtraining; do cross training; allow plenty of rest and recovery; run on a soft, level surfaces or alternating directions on the road.

ALREADY HAVE THESE SYMPTOMS?

Check your footwear, it may be that you need orthotics to help with chronic ITB inflammation. You could also try visiting a physio who offers acupuncture and/or electrotherapy or trigger point massage, and getting a programme of strengthening and stretching exercises. Injections (Botox at the hip or anti-inflammatories at the knee) can also help. ITB Friction Syndrome does not have to be a chronic or debilitating problem. A few preventative measures and careful diagnosis of the cause can lead to a complete recovery.

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RUNNING TO LEARN

A MEDITATION ON THE MOVE



Julia Armstrong is a lifelong runner and all-round running philosopher. She's run a 2:36 marathon and ranks in the top 10 for her age. Every month she shares her thoughts. Catch up at www.runningtolearn.com

Goal setting

A goal, a destination in mind to which we are heading is very important if we want to achieve something. But it is also vital that the goals we set stretch us enough, and at the same time remain achievable.

Sporting goals should help us access qualities and strengths we didn't know we had, improving our mastery of life, as well as our chosen sport, and helping us to be more than we were before.

Get the balance right

If goals impact negatively on our life then we are out of balance and something is not right. We need to look at lifestyle and see the impact our training will have on the whole. For example, many runners may forget to ask: 'Do I have time to recover from the training it will take to reach my goals?'

Many people want to achieve certain things, but they often don't review their life to see whether their lifestyle and attitude supports this. There's always the risk that it won't come off, so part of goal setting is being prepared to take a risk!

Is your goal realistic?

The first step is to look at what we want and why, and then review whether there is any part of us that doesn't want this – it can be easy to become disheartened. Being congruent is important, and taking time to clarify what we want is a crucial step to avoid disappointment.

We must also know how we are going to do what we set out to do. Do we have family support? Do we need a coach? Do we know good physios? Do we have faith in our training? There are many ways to train and it's an individual thing, so finding the way that is right for us needs time.

Get the timing right

It's also important to give ourselves time. Too often people set goals that are unrealistic in their time scale and this can end in failure.

Failure can be part of a learning curve in any journey, but learning from others and being prepared to go forward means that success is far more likely. Ask, listen and learn from the mistakes of others, and go forward with hindsight.

Part of goal setting is being ready to take risks!

Meet Julia at the Running Free Workshop, held in South Kensington on June 25th and September 17th with The Running Inn, visit www.therunninginn.com for more information