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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

Does the Outside of Your Knee Hurt?

Practically everyone complains of a sore knee at some point in time. If it were persistent, you would likely visit your medical or chiropractic doctor to find out what is wrong. Today I would like to discuss one of the less common and often misdiagnosed causes of knee pain.

This type of knee problem has a few characteristics that make it unique. The pain is mostly located at the outside of the knee only, particularly when you walk, stand, or especially run. Symptoms are almost never felt at the inside of the knee. If someone rubs or applies pressure to the side of the knee or just above it, the pain is quite noticeable. If you do a lot of running or walking, you will be more prone for the problem to occur. The outside of the knee and possibly even the hip will "burn" or ache at night when trying to sleep. Also, you will not remember experiencing any trauma such as twisting or falling on the knee.

The clinical term for this problem is "Iliotibial Band Syndrome. The muscles at the side of the hip and buttock attach to a wide tendon (the "iliotibial tendon") that extends all the way down to the side of the knee. After exercising or standing for too long, the muscles of the hip can become tight. Since these muscles attach directly to the tendon, they pull it very tight. Underneath the tendon, there are two jelly filled little sacs (located at the "hip bone" and "outside of the knee") called "bursae". They act as cushions to protect the tendon from rubbing on the most prominent or raised areas of the hip and knee bones as you walk or run. If the tendon is pulled tight by the muscles of the hip, the fluid filled sacs become compressed and excessive friction occurs. This will make them inflamed and quite sore. In this instance, the pain you feel at the outside of the knee is actually due to bursitis (inflammation of a bursa) and not due to damage of the knee cartilage or ligaments.

The treatment for this problem can be done conservatively without anti-inflammatory medications or steroid injections into the bursa. In my office, patients will learn how to stretch the tight muscles of the hip, buttock, and knee. This will remove the tension in the long tendon that is compressing the bursa at the knee. Mild electrical current (Interferential Current) is used to speed up the healing process. Massage or

trigger point therapy of the hip/buttock muscles and of the tendon/bursa are itself will also help. If there is a problem with the arches in the feet, this must be corrected using a custom orthotic or the problem will likely reoccur.

If your knee problem sounds like this one, seek conservative chiropractic treatment first. Weeks of medication and steroid injections will not release the tension in the involved muscles, allowing the symptoms to reoccur. As I always say, “treat the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms”.