

## Cyclists' Knee Pain

Riding a bicycle can be a real pain in the leg.

Many cyclists complain of knee pain. It's a condition known as IT band syndrome, a painful stretching of the iliotibial tissue. In bicycle riders, this thick fibrous tissue running from the hip to the knee gets stretched due to the constant up and down motion of the legs. The stretched tissue then begins to rub against the bony portions of the knees or hip, causing certain pain.

Beginning cyclists commonly complain of IT band syndrome pain. These rookie riders can cycle for hours without giving due respect to the needs of their feet and knees. Other causes of knee pain are poor sitting position, cleat alignment, hard riding or a faulty saddle. It can even be a result of simple body anatomy. The only way to reduce this pain is to ride more slowly. This allows the body more time to adapt to the physical stress of cycling. Minimizing hard riding and stretching before and after riding can also help lessen the effects.

Making changes to your bicycle might also help to reduce cyclists' knee pain. Adjusting the seat higher or lower can be beneficial in taking stress off of the knees. Cyclists' knee pain can occur when the seat is too high, or too low. If the seat is high, the pain will be felt behind the knee; too low, and pain develops in the patella. The only way to find the right seat height is to visit your cycle shop for a professional height adjustment. If you use cleats in cycling, they may need some adjustment as well. Cleats should not float too much internally, nor should they float externally. The ideal cleat position is neutral. The shoe position can be checked at your bike shop, and adjusted using the "fit kit" method.

Chondromalacia is another common cycling-related injury. The constant pressure that's applied to the cartilage behind the patella causes this condition. Strengthening the quadriceps muscles along the front of the thigh can help to relieve the discomfort. Physicians recommend simple exercises, like sitting on a chair and stretching the leg. Avoiding sideward movement while pedaling can also help lessen the pain.

If you experience cyclists' knee pain, try applying ice packs or resting your knee. It's important to cut down on your riding time until the hip or knee pain subsides, or you may risk further damage. Avoid cycling at high speeds or across bumpy surfaces while your knee is on the mend. Mild stretching and icing before and after the ride can help keep the muscles loose, and it's important to keep legs warm during cold weather riding.

Cyclists' knee pain can indicate more serious conditions. If your pain persists or becomes worse, see a doctor or visit a sports clinic for a complete analysis.