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## Common Injuries in Runners

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On Sunday 17 May 2009, thousands of people will take on the 21.1km challenge of the 18th annual *Sydney Morning Herald* Half Marathon presented by *Colonial First State* race through the Sydney CBD.

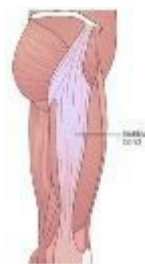
Running is a sport of passion; why else would we torture our bodies with miles of punishment every day? Running injuries are an unfortunate, but all too common, occurrence.

Understanding a running injury is the key to effectively manage the condition. Here you will find efficient resources that explain common problems, and offer information about types of treatment and management for a running injuries.

## Information about common injuries in runners

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### [What is Iliotibial Band Syndrome?](#)



Iliotibial Band Syndrome is due to irritation and inflammation of the iliotibial band, a thick band of fibrous tissue that runs down the outside of the leg. The irritation usually occurs over the outside of the knee joint. The iliotibial band crosses bone and muscle at this point; between these structures is a bursa (a fluid filled sac) which should facilitate a smooth gliding motion. However, when inflamed, the iliotibial band does not glide easily, and pain associated with movement is the result.

### [Symptoms of Iliotibial Band Syndrome](#)

- When irritated, movement of the knee joint becomes painful.
- Usually the pain worsens with continued movement, and resolves with rest.
- Pain is worse running downhill than uphill or going down the stairs.
- Often unable to bend the knee without pain.
- An adaptive walking pattern may result where the person walks with a straight leg.

### [Why did I get Iliotibial Band Syndrome?](#)

- People who suddenly increase their level of activity, such as runners who increase their mileage, often develop iliotibial band syndrome.
- Others who are prone to ITBS include individuals with mechanical problems of their gait such as people who overpronate, have leg length discrepancies, or are bow-legged.

For more information on Iliotibial Band Syndrome please [click here](#).

### [What are Shin Splints?](#)

The term shin splints is a common misnomer in sports medicine. It does not imply a specific diagnosis, rather it is the symptom of pain over the front of the tibia bone. The pain from shin splints can be due to either problems of the muscles, the bone, or the attachment of the muscle to the bone.

Shin splints are most commonly due to overuse. When the overuse causes irritation to the tendons and the attachment of these tendons to the bone, the condition is called medial tibial stress syndrome. This is what most people are talking about when they use the words shin splints as a diagnosis.

Medial tibial stress syndrome, or shin splints as most people call this problem, is commonly seen in athletes who suddenly increase their duration or intensity of training. This type of shin splints may also be seen in athletes who have very high demand training levels, such as marathon runners, even if their training levels are not dramatically increased. In the case of shin splints, damage is usually at the site of attachment of the lower leg muscles to the shin bone. If the condition is left untreated and painful activities continued, damage will progress and a stress fracture may result.

### [Symptoms of Shin Splints](#)

- Patients will often experience pain and tenderness to touch in the lower leg, particularly along the inside of the shin bone (tibia).
- As the condition becomes more severe, there may be some swelling and/or redness, lumps and bumps along the shin and pain when the foot is pointed downwards.
- In the early stages, pain occurs during the first part of the training session and then goes away as you warm-up, pain often returns after exercise or the next morning.
- As the condition worsens the time spent with pain increases, the symptoms become increasingly debilitating to the point where everyday activities (eg. walking on steps, steep hills) are acutely painful and finally pain can be present even at rest and at night.

For more information on Shin Splints please [click here](#).

### [What is Runner's Knee?](#)

This is a broad term used to describe pain felt in the front of the knee. Generally there are three main conditions associated with the symptoms of runner's knee:

1. Patellafemoral pain syndrome,
2. Patella tendonopathy
3. Fat pad impingement.

### Symptoms of Runner's Knee

- Pain can be felt behind the knee, on either side of the knee or below the knee and may be on one or both legs.
- Stairs are very often problematic with pain usually worse going down than up, walking downhill may be painful as with running, prolonged sitting (eg. on a plane or at the movies), squatting or kneeling.
- Pain is usually described as an ache, although certain movements may cause sharp pain or a burning sensation, some patients may also feel as if their knee occasionally gives way from under them.
- Symptoms most commonly follow commencement of a running program or an increase in distance or intensity.

### How does it occur?



As the knee bends and straightens, the underside of the kneecap (patella) slides up and down in a groove at the end of the thigh bone (femur). If the patella is not aligned correctly with the groove there may be irritation of the joint cartilage covering the joint surfaces as the knee bends and straightens. Irritation results in inflammation and pain of the joint and surrounding structures and may eventually result in early degenerative change at the joint if provocative activities are not ceased.

For more information on Runner's Knee:

1. [Patellafemoral Pain Syndrome](#)
2. [Patellar Tendinopathy](#)
3. [Fat Pad Impingement](#)

### Tips for Preventing Running Injuries

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#### 1. Stretch stretch stretch!!!

The benefits of stretching have been the cornerstone to preventing musculoskeletal injuries for decades. Pre and post-exercise stretching can also aid in workout recovery, decrease muscle soreness, and ensure that your muscles and tendons are in good working order. The more conditioned your muscles and tendons are, the better they can handle the rigors of sport and exercise, and the less likely that they'll become injured.

[Click here](#) to download some useful stretches to prevent iliotibial friction syndrome, shin splints and runner's knee.

#### 2. Correct Biomechanics of the Lower Limb

Excessive pronation combined with poor posture of the foot and leg can cause related foot, shin, knee, hip and back problems. Pronation of the foot is the rolling in or rotation of the foot. Related injuries, can be treated effectively with semi-rigid orthotics. They're supportive enough to alter lower limb biomechanical dysfunction, in order to stabilize and realign the feet into there optimal position.

#### 3. Massage



The benefits of sport's massage are plenty! The most important aspects pertaining to athletes are that deep tissue massage breaks down scar tissue. Scar tissue is the result of previous injuries or trauma and can affect muscle, tendons and ligaments. This can lead to inflexible tissues that are prone to injury and pain. Massage also improves tissue elasticity. Hard training can make tissues hard and inelastic. This is one reason why hard training may result in injury. Massage helps reverse this by stretching the tissues.

### This Month's SPECIAL!!!!

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Understand how your poor foot biomechanics may cause foot, shin, knee, hip or back pain – receive a **FREE Biomechanical assessment** to the value of \$75.00 with Corey who is one of our physiotherapists with a special interest in lower limb biomechanics.

This limited **FREE** offer is only available to the **first 11** callers who quote the reference *PHYSIO4ALL MAY E-News 2009*.

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