

SHIN SPLINT

WHAT ARE SHIN SPLINTS?

Shin splints is a general term used to describe several overuse conditions that cause lower leg pain. One of the most common of these conditions is Medial Tibial Stress Syndrome (MTSS). This injury is characterized by tenderness along the inner aspect of your shin bone (the tibia) as well as pain with activity.

The pain often develops gradually. You usually start out feeling some discomfort only after activity. If the condition is ignored, pain will be experienced during and after activity, often affecting your performance. Eventually, the condition may progress to a stress fracture, a tiny crack in the bone.

WHAT CAUSES SHIN SPLINTS?

MTSS is an overuse injury from trying to do too much too soon. The area where your lower leg muscles attach to your shin bone is irritated. The bone covering (periosteum) is often inflamed as well. In addition to training errors, foot abnormalities and improper footwear can contribute to shin pain, too. For example, an excessively high-arched foot doesn't absorb shock too well. Forces are transmitted up the shin each time the foot strikes the ground when running, which can eventually cause pain.

Overuse and improper footwear are common causes of shin pain.

If this sounds like your type of foot, wear shoes with a well-cushioned heel and insole that absorb energy at the point of impact. Those with low-arched feet have a problem as well. Each time this type of foot strikes the ground, it rolls in excessively (pronates). Over time, this can cause inflammation of the shin muscles and tendons. If you are flat-footed, wear shoes that have a firm midsole to help control excessive motion. Some type of additional arch support may be necessary as well - so check with your doctor or a foot specialist if you have been prone to shin splints.

PREVENTING SHIN SPLINTS

- ▶ **Progress your training slowly.** Gradually increase the intensity, frequency and duration of your workouts. Runners should not increase their distance by more than 10% a week.
- ▶ **Wear proper footwear and replace running shoes every 300-400 miles.** Visit a shoe specialist to help fit a shoe properly and fit a shoe specifically for your foot-type.
- ▶ **Warm-up and stretch properly before activity.** Hold stretches at least 30 seconds and repeat several times each. Stretch after activity too.
- ▶ **Run on softer surfaces when possible.**
- ▶ **Be careful when changing running surfaces.** For example, if you play field hockey or soccer all fall on grass and then switch to playing basketball in the winter, the change in surface can cause shin pain. When you must change running surfaces, back off a little bit and then gradually build up to the amount of running you were doing before.

USE ICE MASSAGE

Ice massage is one of the best forms of treatment for shin pain. Fill several paper cups with water and freeze them at home. When frozen, peel off the top of the cup. Rub the ice up and down on your shin for 7-10 minutes, 4-5 times a day. Ice massage cups are available in the Training Room in the large white freezer.

ADDITIONAL TREATMENT MEASURES INCLUDE:

- ▶ Rest by reducing or avoiding running and jumping activities.
- ▶ Stretch and strengthen your shin muscles.
- ▶ Correct foot abnormalities through the use of arch supports or better running shoes if necessary.
- ▶ Adjust any training errors.