

Shin Splints

The basics By Brian Beise



Many of us have dealt with shin splints, but we may not know much about them. So we asked **Matt Provenzano** of Summit Physical Therapy to give us the ins and outs of shin splints – and provide helpful tips to prevent them.

Medial tibial stress syndrome (shin splints) is an inflammation of the muscles, tendons, and bone tissue around the tibia (shinbone). Excessive force, such as that caused by running or repetitive loading activities, can overload the shinbone and connective tissues attaching muscle to bone and cause shin splints. Runners who don't increase mileage incrementally, or athletes who participate with improper or worn-out footwear, put themselves at risk.

Symptoms

Symptoms can include pain, tenderness, or soreness along the inner part of the lower leg (the tibia, where muscles attach to the bone) and moderate swelling in the lower leg, which can irritate the nerves and lead to numbness or weakness in the feet.

Diagnosis & Treatment

Shin splints are usually diagnosed based on your medical history and a physical exam by your doctor or a physical therapist. A key sign that you have them is pain in the inner border of the shin when pressure is applied (shin palpation test). In some cases, an X-ray or other imaging studies can help identify other possible causes for your pain.

See your doctor if acute, severe pain in your shin follows a fall or accident, if your shin is hot and inflamed, if swelling in your shin seems to be getting worse, or if your shin pain persists while at rest. Physical therapy and the use of orthotics and proper footwear can help speed up the recovery process.

An Ounce of Prevention

In addition to aiding in recovery, physical therapy can also correct bad bio-mechanics (your gait, or form, when you run), lowering your chance of getting shin splints again. Running on proper surfaces, using good shoes and orthotics, and listening to your body can also help prevent shin splints. If a movement or exercise hurts, stop. Exercising through pain can lead to more serious injuries like stress fractures.

Don't forget these 4 easy steps after an injury:

- Rest
- Ice
- Compression
- Elevation

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