Shin Splints

Definition
Shin splints refer to a condition that causes pain and sometimes swelling in the front part of the lower leg (shin). The pain is most likely from repeated stress on the shin bone (tibia) and the tissue that connects the muscle to the tibia. Although the term shin splints is often used, it is not a defined medical diagnosis.

Causes
Most people get shin splints from repeated pounding on hard surfaces during activities such as running, basketball or tennis. Additional causes include:

- Change to new running or workout shoes or wearing shoes that don’t have enough support. This can happen when your shoes wear out from overuse.
- Running or walking on a different surface than you are used to. For example, you might get shin splints when switching from running on a trail to concrete.
- A sudden change in activity such as working out harder than usual or increasing training too fast instead of working up to a training level gradually.
- Flat feet or a very rigid arch, which may place more stress on the lower leg.

Symptoms

- Pain in the front of the lower legs
- Pain along the inside of the tibia, the large bone in the lower part of the leg
- Minor swelling
- Dull to sharp pain during activity

First Aid
In many cases you can use home treatment to help relieve pain and swelling from shin splints.

- Rest. Complete rest for the first 2 weeks is best, but you don’t have to stop exercising. The idea is that you can exercise as long as it isn’t painful.
- Choose low-impact activities such as swimming or cycling instead of, or in combination with, running or other high-impact activities.
- Run or exercise only on soft surfaces, such as dirt or grass.
- Avoid hills and inclines when training.

For more information, or to contact one of our Sports Medicine Outreach Liaisons, email us at SportsMedicine@amitahealth.org or call us at 224.273.2416

AMITAhealth.org/SportsMedicine
The AMITA Health Orthopedics Institute is a national leader in musculoskeletal care, offering comprehensive and advanced care for a wide range of conditions. We are proactive about keeping you active. That is why our multi-disciplinary orthopedic teams enlist a comprehensive leading edge approach to the prevention, assessment, treatment and rehabilitation of musculoskeletal injuries.

Our team of highly-experienced board-certified physicians, surgeons, therapists and nurses are dedicated to providing patients of all ages with a personalized treatment program that is customized for your condition, lifestyle and personal preferences.

We work hard to prevent sports-related injuries, which have become increasingly more common among athletes, especially children. AMITA Health Sports Medicine Outreach Liaisons keep kids active and participating in the extracurricular activities they enjoy by delivering educational programs and support for parents, coaches and athletes that focus on injury prevention, proper technique and overall athletic care.

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• Reduce speed, duration and distance when training.
• Apply ice or a cold pack for 10-20 minutes, three or more times a day.
• Elevate your lower leg while you apply ice and anytime you sit or lie down.
• Use over-the-counter pain medication such as ibuprofen.
• See a therapist about proper shoes, stretches and exercises that may help.

When to Contact a Medical Professional
• Pain continues and is persistent, even with rest.
• You are not sure whether the pain is caused by shin splints.
• You don’t improve with home treatment after several weeks.
• You have a stress fracture.