A stress fracture is a small crack generally in the weight-bearing bones of the foot and lower leg that can occur from overuse through high-impact sports such as running, soccer, tennis, basketball and others.

Stepping up exercise frequency too quickly can lead to a stress fracture as can using ill-fitting or old sports equipment and changing the conditions of where the exercise occurs such as running outdoors when indoor running has been a routine.

Females are at higher risk for stress fractures, which many in the medical community attribute to irregular menstrual cycles that may decrease bone strength, osteoporosis and eating disorders. Incorrect techniques and even a blister can lead to a stress fracture developing because they change the way the foot connects to the ground, possibly placing added force on the load-bearing bones.

Slow onset pain that grows stronger with activity, including normal daily activities but subsides with rest, may be a sign of a stress fracture. Stress fractures may also produce symptoms of swelling, site sensitivity and even bruising. Six to eight weeks of rest is important to heal a stress fracture. Depending on its severity, a doctor’s appointment may be needed for conservative treatments that might include protective footwear or a cast. The treating doctor may order a bone scan or magnetic resonance imaging scan to confirm a stress fracture diagnosis. In some cases surgery may be needed and often entails using a fastener to support the fractured bone(s).

To confirm or rule out a stress fracture, speak with your doctor.
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.

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