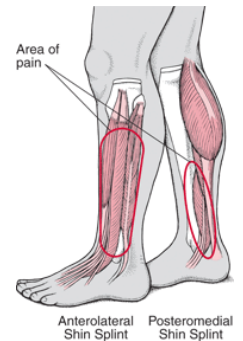


Shin Splints



The term "shin splints" refers to pain along the shinbone (tibia) — the large bone in the front of your lower leg. The pain is the result of an overload on the shinbone and the connective tissues that attach your muscles to the bone. Shin splints are common among runners and other athletes and most often caused by specific activities such as:

- Running downhill
- Running on a slanted or tilted surface
- Running in worn-out footwear
- Engaging in sports with frequent starts and stops, such as basketball and tennis
- Training too hard, too fast or for too long.

If you have flat arches, your feet may have a tendency to roll too far inward (pronate) when running — which can contribute to shin splints.

If you have shin splints, you may notice tenderness, soreness or pain along the inner part of your lower leg and/or mild swelling. At first, the pain may stop when you stop running or exercising. Eventually, however, the pain may be continuous. It can usually be treated with rest, ice and other self-care measures — and wearing proper footwear. Consult your doctor if treatment doesn't ease your shin pain. Shin splints are usually diagnosed based on your medical history and a physical exam. In some cases, an X-ray or other imaging studies can help the doctor rule out other conditions, such as a stress fracture — tiny cracks in a bone often caused by overuse.

While you're healing, try low-impact exercises, such as swimming, bicycling or water running. If your shin pain causes you to limp, consider using crutches until you can walk normally without pain. Also, you may follow the subsequent treatment:

- *Ice the affected area.* Apply ice packs to the affected shin for 15 to 20 minutes at a time, four times a day for several days. To protect your skin, wrap the ice packs in a thin towel.
- *Reduce swelling.* Elevate the affected shin above the level of your heart, especially at night. It may also help to compress the area with an elastic bandage or compression sleeve. Loosen the wrap if the pain increases, the area becomes numb or swelling occurs below the wrapped area.
- *Take an over-the-counter pain reliever.* Try ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, others), naproxen (Aleve) or aspirin to reduce pain and inflammation.
- *Wear proper shoes.* Your doctor may recommend a shoe that's especially suited for your foot type, your stride and your particular sport.
- *Consider arch supports.* Arch supports can help cushion and disperse stress on your shinbones. Off-the-shelf arch supports come in various sizes and can be fitted immediately. More durable arch supports can be custom-made.

It's also important to resume your usual activities gradually. If your shin isn't completely healed, returning to your usual activities too quickly may only cause continued pain.

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