

## Shin Splints and Lower Leg Pain

Generally, shin splints are felt on (1) the outside front part of the leg or (2) the inside back part of the leg. The first type is generally due to walking or running on hard surfaces or poor shock absorbing ability of the involved muscles or shoes. The second type is common in athletes whose feet are hyperpronated (roll in/flatten). Repetitive overstraining of muscles are a factor in both types.

Sports with the highest frequency of shin splints include long distance running, jogging, race walking, aerobic dance, sprinting, cross country skiing, soccer, and volleyball. If these activities are done on hard surfaces (cement or asphalt) you'll want to replace shoes frequently with pairs that provide excellent support and shock absorption.

Common treatments for shin splints are ice, compression, muscle release therapies, chiropractic adjusting for the hip, foot, ankle and leg joints, functional athletic taping and modification of activity. For some people, stretching the involved muscles may increase pain, while for others, the pain is temporarily relieved. Squeezing the area with your hand often provides some relief.

To help prevent the problem, replace your worn-out shoes or buy an arch support. Often I find that custom made foot orthotics are necessary. Stretch before you exercise, emphasizing the calf muscles and those that support the arch. Eccentric exercises, drinking lots of water and taking a 1000mg calcium supplement each day are also helpful.

The diagnosis of shin splints may mimic or overlap with other causes of leg pain including stress fracture, bruising, sciatica or cardiovascular problems. As always, if the problem doesn't get well on its own have it examined to be sure it's nothing more.

Yours in health,

Dr. Rick

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