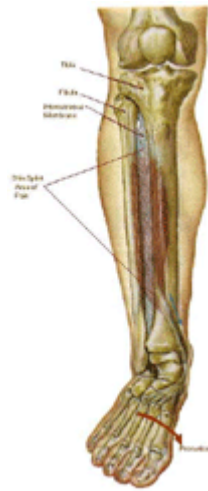


SHIN SPLINTS

by Scott Tribby 06_01_06

For those of us who lead an active lifestyle, it's almost inevitable that at some point we'll sustain some sort of chronic injury. Overuse, stress and improper biomechanics can lead to aggravating pain and discomfort. At its mildest it will be a nuisance, but at its worst it can be debilitating and affect your ability to function properly. To ignore or deny that the condition exists is a recipe for it developing into a much more serious problem. Luckily, most chronic injuries can be easily treated with a little diligence and effort. In the following series of articles, I'll be addressing a number of different injuries, going over both treatment and preventative measures.

The first condition that I'm going to address is Medial Tibial Stress Syndrome, or Shin Splints as they're better known. These primarily affect athletes who undergo a large amount of "pounding" on the legs and feet, such as sprinters, gymnasts, soccer players, etc. For those who've been unfortunate enough to have experienced this, you know how painful it can be.



The main symptom is pain located in the lower half of the leg (towards the inside) which gets worse with exercise. This pain can sometimes continue for periods of time after ceasing exercise. Most often, the cause of this is the soleus (the flat calf muscle that lies deep to the gastrocnemius) pulling on the periosteum (the outermost layer of bone) of the tibia. This leads to pain and inflammation in the area, particularly after repetitive actions of a pounding nature. Other than the repetitive stress, tight calf muscles and faulty foot mechanics are also thought to contribute to shin splints.

So once you've realized that you have shin splints, what can you do to get rid of them? The following is a list of things that can be done to remedy the situation:

- have your gait analyzed (this can be done at most higher-end running shoe stores)
- watch your training volume - often doing too much, too soon is the main culprit
- ice, and then ice some more
- massage

- stretch your calf muscles regularly
- rest, and return to the offending exercise SLOWLY and progressively

When returning to exercise, start running on a softer surface like grass or dirt. This will reduce the forces on the foot, thereby reducing the stress on the soleus. A final word of caution, if after utilizing these methods your symptoms do not improve, go see a physician. Shin splints have the same symptoms as a tibial fracture, which makes it difficult to differentiate at first. Should you have a tibial fracture, the treatment methods and healing time are much different.

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Scott is both a Sports Performance Coach and Licensed Massage Therapist that has worked with clients from every background. For the past 6 years he's helped elite athletes in a myriad of different sports (lacrosse, hockey, wrestling, tennis, soccer) achieve a high level of success, as well as those clients who are seeking to better their fitness and lead more productive, fulfilling lives.

Having also worked as a therapist in clinical settings, he also has experience dealing with clients who are injured and undergoing rehabilitation. By pairing these two skill sets with one another, Scott's overall philosophy is one that focuses on long-term health, maximum functionality and injury prevention. He is a firm believer that hard work pays big dividends, and is with his clients every step of the way to ensure that they achieve what they've set out to.

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