

Shin Splints

Baylor SportsCare

We'll give you a healthy advantage.

Baylor SportsCare provides the winning combination of education, support and sports medicine for athletes of all ages. We can help you:

- Prevent & treat sports-related injuries by providing medical coverage and educational programs
- Access Baylor Health Care System specialized sports medicine physicians* and services throughout the Metroplex
- Develop and promote athletic programs and activities
- Organize special events

For more information about SportsCare, or for help in finding a physician who is right for you, contact your local SportsCare representative at

(972) 512-7404

or call **1-800-4BAYLOR** and ask for "Baylor SportsCare"

*Physicians are members of the medical staff at one of Baylor Health Care System's subsidiary, community or affiliated medical centers and are neither employees nor agents of those medical centers, Baylor University Medical Center or Baylor Health Care System. CE 12.07

Definition

Shin splints refers 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:

- A 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
- Pain may be dull to sharp 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 two 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.
- Reduce speed, duration and distance when training.
- Apply ice or a cold pack for 10 to 20 minutes, 3 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 which may help.

When to Contact a Medical Professional

- The 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