

Center for Athletic Medicine

830 W Diversey #300

Chicago IL 606014

773 248 4150

What are Shin Splints?

“Shin splints” is a general term referring to pain along the inside of the shin. Shin splints can come from a stress fracture of one of the lower leg bones, or from irritation of the calf muscles where they attach to the bones.

Who gets shin splints?

Shin splints most commonly affect athletes in running and jumping sports.

What causes shin splints?

Overtraining (i.e. “too much, too soon”) is the most common reason athletes develop shin splints. Other contributing factors include biomechanical abnormalities (i.e. flat feet), poor flexibility and strength in the calf muscles, worn-out shoes, or abrupt change in training surface.

How are shin splints treated?

The first principle of treatment is rest. Start by reducing training by 50% for one week. Stretch calf muscles several times a day, especially before and after running. Apply ice for 20-30 minutes after running. If this eliminates the pain, gradually increase training again by 10% per week.

If pain is severe enough to interfere with walking or causes you to limp, complete rest from running will be required for a short period of time. Athletes with severe pain should see a sports medicine physician, who will evaluate for the presence of stress fracture by performing xrays, and determine the need for an anti-inflammatory, custom-fitted orthotics, and/or a formal rehabilitation program.