

How To

Prevent / Treat Shin Splints

COMMON CAUSES

Placing too much demand on the shin muscles from unfamiliar volume or type of activity, most often a running sport.

Old or improper shoes.

Poor foot biomechanics causing the shin muscles to become overworked.

PREVENTION TIPS

Tip #1: If you are just getting back into running, slowly increase your mileage. The 10-percent rule is one of the most important and time-proven principles in running. It states that you should never increase your weekly mileage by more than 10 percent over the previous week. Don't try to run 6 miles the first day out if you haven't run 3 miles in 6 months!

Tip #2: Warm up before your run and stretch afterwards.

Exercises

1. Plantar Flexion and Dorsiflexion: Point and flex. Sit in a chair or on the floor with legs out in front of you. Point toes down toward floor and hold for a count of 2 then flex toes and feet back toward you for same time. 3 sets of 10.
2. Spell the alphabet. Sit in a chair, lift feet off of floor and spell the alphabet in the air one foot at a time.
3. Heel and Toe Walks: Walk on heels all the way across a room. Then, walk back on toes. 3 times.
4. Ankle Dorsiflexion and Achilles Stretch: Sit on the floor with legs in front of you. Grab a towel or exercise band and place behind feet. Hold both sides of towel and pull toes toward you while keeping back straight and chest out. Hold for 30-60 seconds. 2-3 times.

Tip #3: If you are experiencing shin pain after your runs apply the **RICE** principle- Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation. Freeze water in paper cups and tear away the rim; this is a convenient way to apply ice massage to sore shins.

TREATMENT

1. Start with a proper gait and foot assessment to determine if there's a biomechanical problem of your feet. No amount of rest or exercising or kinesiology taping will be able to overcome a significant biomechanical problem of the feet. Very often people who suffer from shin splints have "flat feet"
2. Stretch the calf muscles! The calf muscles are tight on most people so a good stretching program is almost always part of the solution.
3. Cut back on any activities where there is a lot of uphill or downhill running. It places excessive demand on the "braking" role of the shin muscles.
4. Cut back on any sports that are on hard surfaces and run on trails instead of asphalt/concrete for a while.
5. Ice after activity. 10 minutes on, 10 minutes off, then 10 more on.