

Shin Splints

Medial tibial stress syndrome, “shin splints”, is characterized by pain along the lower leg (posterior medial tibia). This pain is caused by inflammation of the soft tissue surrounding and attaching to the shin. This pain may occur only after activity, before and after activity, or before, during and after activity. Shin Splints will commonly occur early in the season due to improper preparation for athletic activity. This condition should not be ignored. Shin splints usually will resolve with proper treatment. Treatment is necessary to alleviate progression to the more severe problems (stress fracture).

Signs & Symptoms:

- Pain in the front of leg
- Abnormal gait (the way in which one walks)
- Pain on active, passive, and resistive dorsiflexion of the ankle
- Absence of pain at rest and with the fulcrum testing

Causes:

- Overuse
- An anatomic abnormality such as flat feet or over pronation
- Poor running technique
- Training errors
- Poor training surfaces
- Improper footwear
- Improper stretching to prepare for activity
- Rapid change in body habitus

Treatment:

- Rest: this may be modification of activity or complete rest for a period of time
- Heat and stretching the Achilles prior to activity
- Ice therapy and stretching following activity (ice massage)
- Stretching should be done several times per day with primary focus on the calf musculature (calf stretch, toe raises, heel walking)
- Temporary use of anti-inflammatory medication as directed by physician
- A proper fitting shoe which provides good shock absorption and a firm heel counter
- Compression sleeve that is used to provide compression for support and continued warmth to the area.