

Shin Splints? Here's 10 Tips for Staying Pain-Free

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"Shin splint" is the catch-all term for lower leg pain that occurs below the knee either on the front outside part of the leg (anterior shin splints) or the inside of the leg (medial shin splints).

Experts agree that when shin splints strike, you should stop running completely or decrease your training. Then ice your shin to reduce inflammation. Here are some other treatments you can try:

- Gently stretch your Achilles if you have medial shin splints, and your calves if you have anterior shin splints. Also, try this stretch for your shins: Kneel on a carpeted floor, legs and feet together and toes pointed directly back. Then slowly sit back onto your calves and heels, pushing your ankles into the floor until you feel tension in the muscles of your shin. Hold for 10 to 12 seconds, relax and repeat.
- In a sitting position, trace the alphabet on the floor with your toes. Do this with each leg. Or alternate walking on your heels for 30 seconds with 30 seconds of regular walking. Repeat four times. These exercises are good for both recovery and prevention. Try to do them three times a day.
- If you continue running, wrap your leg before you go out. Use either tape or an Ace bandage, starting just above the ankle and continuing to just below the knee. Keep wrapping your leg until the pain goes away, which usually takes three to six weeks.
- Consider cross-training for a while to let your shin heal. Swim, run in the pool or ride a bike.
- When you return to running, increase your mileage slowly, no more than 10 percent weekly.
- Make sure you wear the correct running shoes for your foot type specifically, overpronators should wear motion-control shoes. Severe overpronators may need orthotics.
- Have two pairs of shoes and alternate wearing them to vary the stresses on your legs.
- Avoid hills and excessively hard surfaces until shin pain goes away completely, then re-introduce them gradually to prevent a recurrence.
- If you frequently run on roads with an obvious camber, run out and back on the same side of the road.
- If you are prone to developing shin splints, stretch your calves and Achilles regularly as a preventive measure.