



## **Shin Splints**

Ouch! You have just started training for another event and a pain develops in the shin that never seems to go away. Sound like you? It's likely that you have developed one of the most common injuries seen in the lower leg. Shin pain accounts for 60% of injuries to the leg. This condition frequently occurs in high impact sports e.g. running, basketball, netball, aerobics. Commonly referred to as shin splints, this is a poor term to describe many conditions that occur in this region. It is no longer considered a diagnosis by clinicians. Shin pain must be distinguished from other causes of shin pain such as compartment syndrome and stress fracture. It is important that a sports podiatrist, physiotherapist or doctor diagnose the condition at the initial onset of pain.

### **WHAT IS IT?**

The most common shin pain athletes develop is stress to the muscles and tissues that attach to the inside of the tibia (shin bone). Running loads the muscle and bone three times your body weight and jumping sports such as basketball will load up to six times. The shock on the bone and load on the muscle attachments pull on the outer surface of the bone causing inflammation and pain along the inside of the shin. It is described as a sharp splinting, hence the term 'shin splints' is frequently used.

### **SYMPTOMS**

In the initial stages pain occurs along the shin bone and gets easier with warming up. As training continues the pain becomes more intense and is noticed during training and afterwards. When pressing along the shin bone it is tender.

## COMMON CAUSES

- Over pronation of the foot- a very common cause. This makes the shin muscles work harder and longer. A Bigfoot podiatrist can assess for this.
- Incorrect footwear – old shoes or the wrong model of shoe
- Over Training “too much too soon” -training program is too intense or mileage increased too quickly with insufficient recovery
- Hard surfaces—preseason training on hard grounds or aerobic gyms built on concrete increases the stress on the muscles and bone
- Sudden change in activity - the shin muscles are not conditioned for the new impact and are overworked. This is frequently seen in preseason training or starting a new sport.
- Tight calf muscles

## HOW DO I GET BETTER?

To get you back to recovery as soon as possible the best treatment involves seeing a sports podiatrist and physiotherapist. A Bigfoot podiatrist will diagnose the injury; assess your training program, shoes and level of pronation. We work with the best physiotherapists, sports doctors, and shoe retailers in NZ and can refer you to the appropriate specialist to get you onto the road to recovery. All Bigfoot podiatrists are actively involved in sports and have been injured. We know how it feels to not train and will work hard to get you back on the road to recovery. Common treatments for shin pain include:

- Ice massage - rub an ice cube along the shin after exercise (20minutes)
- Anti-inflammatory gel - voltaren emugel can be of benefit in some cases
- Orthoses - customised insoles to lessen the load on the muscles and bone
- Change Footwear - make sure you are in the correct shoe for your sport and foot type.
- Rest from weightbearing sport. - this maybe a temporary measure to allow the inflammation to settle down. Swimming/cycling/rowers/aqua jogging are alternatives
- Massage - breaks down any adhesions and improves blood flow to the region. Professional massage is recommended
- Physiotherapy - helps reduce inflammation in the initial stages, loosen the shin muscles, and improve flexibility (acupuncture may be used)
- Stability Training - hip and abdominal strength exercises
- Stretching - calf muscles

[www.bigfootpodiatry.co.nz](http://www.bigfootpodiatry.co.nz)

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