



SHIN SPLINTS: REHAB EXERCISES AND COMMON MYTHS

Signs and Symptoms

The term “shin splints” refers to pain caused by an overuse injury that occurs with increased loading during high-impact exercise. “Shin splints” is a general term used for both medial tibial stress syndrome and anterior tibial stress syndrome. In this report, we will talk about medial tibial stress syndrome, as this is more commonly seen at Rehab United, although the following tips and exercises provided may be helpful for both types of shin splints. Medial tibial stress syndrome presents as pain on the front of the shin bone also known as the tibia. Pain increases with activities such as running, jumping, and dancing. Medial tibial stress syndrome is treated conservatively with activity modification and specific exercises prescribed by a physical therapist.

Important

This report is focused on shin splints. If you suffered an acute injury as a result of contact or non-contact injury and are having swelling, difficulty walking, and increase pain please contact me directly either via email kelly@rehabunited.com or call our office at (206) 524-4977.

Myth #1: Stop All Activities and Stay Off of It

Limiting motion and movement can be one of the worse things you can do either for an acute injury or chronic injury. “Motion is Lotion” and “Movement is Medicine” it is important to find stretches and strengthening exercises that you can do to keep your body moving and prevent your pain from getting worse. Although you may have to modify the activity contributing to your pain, continuing to move is vital to recovery.

Myth #2: The R.I.C.E. Method is Best for My Shin Splints

Ice may help reduce pain, but it will only stiffen up the joint more and hinder quicker recovery. An active range of motion and movement is better early on since our muscles act as pumps to help flush the swelling out. You can continue to use ice for pain relief for the first 7-10 days as needed, but staying in motion is KEY to recovery.

Myth #3: New Shoes Will Resolve My Shin Splints

While old running shoes may be contributing to your pain, new shoes are not the ONLY solution to resolving shin splints. In addition to considering footwear, it is also important to consider other contributors to your pain including potential muscle imbalances or improper movement mechanics. Addressing all contributors to your pain will help prevent future flare-ups.

Early Rehab Exercises

1. Calf Stretch

Begin in a split stance, leaning on the table for support. Keeping both toes facing forwards, bend the front knee and keep the back knee straight until you feel a stretch in the back calf. Hold for 30-60 seconds and repeat 2 to 3 times.

Watch Video: [See the Exercise Demonstration Here](#)

2. Single Leg Cone Touch

Begin standing barefoot with a cone or other object on the floor in front of you. Keeping a straight line between the back foot and head, bend at hips and lift the back leg, then touch the object with one hand. Slowly return to starting position. Repeat 6-8 times.

Watch Video: [See the Exercise Demonstration Here](#)

3. 3-Way Lunge

Begin standing with feet shoulder width apart. Lunge forward and return to standing for each leg, then lunge side to side, and back diagonal returning to your starting position between each exercise. Use a dowel, ball, or hands to reach different heights to make the exercises more difficult. Let the front knee drive over the toe but keep the foot flat on the ground. Improving the strength and stability of the hip will aid in offloading forces through the foot.

Watch Video: [See the Exercise Demonstration Here](#)

4. See a Physical Therapist / Movement Specialist!

If you are suffering from a significant amount of shin splint pain and it is affecting your ability to participate in your sport it is important to be seen by a physical therapist. A physical therapist is a movement expert and is trained in treating athletes that suffer from injuries including shin splints. A physical therapist can help get to the root cause of your injury and prescribe a more individualized program to resolve your shin splints.

Schedule A Visit: [Request an Appointment Here](#)