



# Shin splints can sidetrack your RUNNING ROUTINE

If shin splints are keeping you from making the most of your runs this spring, you're not alone. Shin splints—pain in the front of the lower legs—is common among those who exercise regularly. This ailment especially affects runners.

According to Dr. Matthew Silvis, associate professor of family medicine and orthopedics at Penn State Hershey, shin splints are among the most common complaints in spring for people back on the road or trail after a long winter.

The term *shin splints* generally refers to pain and soreness along the shinbone, or tibia, the largest bone of the lower leg. The pain comes from overuse of the muscles and tendons around the bone. Added or unusual stress on and around the shinbone causes it to become inflamed and sore.

If you're already dealing with shin splints, icing the area can help. So can taking an over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medicine if needed for pain. Wait to return to your activity until you're pain-free for 2 weeks.

## THE FIX

Give the body time to adjust when changing an exercise routine. Doing too much too soon can bring on shin splints. If untreated, a more serious injury—stress fracture—can result. Stress fractures—tiny cracks in the bone—usually come from overuse. To avoid this:

- Gradually increase the amount or intensity of a workout to avoid too much stress on the legs.
- Follow a regular, gentle stretching routine that includes the calves. Keeping the muscles around the shinbone flexible can help prevent shin splints.
- Wear well-fitting, supportive athletic shoes. And replace them every 300 to 500 miles.
- Balance running workouts with other training that isn't as stressful on the legs. Examples are cycling, cross-training, and swimming.