



SHIN SPLINTS & STRESS FRACTURES

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The Facts Behind Shin Splints and Stress Fractures

- Most stress fractures occur in the weight-bearing bones of the lower leg and foot.
- More than 50 percent of all stress fractures occur in the lower leg.
- Studies have shown tennis, track and field, gymnastics and basketball athletes are the most susceptible to stress fractures and shin splints.
- Studies have also shown that female athletes typically experience more stress fractures than male athletes.

How to Diagnose

The best way to determine if an injury is shin splints or a stress fracture is to visit your athletic trainer or sports medicine professional. They will perform a full evaluation and possibly recommend additional tests, such as an MRI or bone scan. The medical professional can also help you modify activity to help the healing process.

Shin splints and stress fractures: both are overuse injuries caused by rapid increase in the amount or intensity of an activity. Despite this similarity, they are not the same and affect the body in different ways.

Shin splints are injuries to the soft tissue of the lower leg caused by micro tearing.

Stress fractures are physical changes, such as cracks and breaks, to the bones of the lower leg caused by muscles too fatigued to absorb added shock, sending that shock to the bone.

How to Prevent Shin Splints and Stress Fractures

- Check with your AT to make sure you are wearing appropriate footwear.
- Maintain a healthy diet.
- Ask a medical professional if you should supplement vitamin D and/or calcium.
- Work with your athletic trainer to modify your training schedule to reduce repetitive stress.
- Work on flexibility and strength of the leg muscles.
- Make sure there is a healthy balance between training and recovery.
- Add cross training to accomplish fitness goals, such as deep water running, swimming or biking.