

Shin pain is common for all runners but especially those that are new to running or starting to run again after some time off. Working on the soft tissue around your shin and your calf complex can drastically improve your pain and reduce the chance of you shutting down your running. This is something I wish I knew 13 years ago when I was starting out as an athletic trainer. It is very simple to do and can help avoid the pain from progressing.

Shin splints is the common name for shin pain on the inside part of your shin when running. It can occur anywhere in the lower extremity but typically is the lower 1/3 of the leg. It can be painful to touch and very painful to run on. When you initially feel this pain, I recommend you perform these exercises immediately before it worsens.

As a whole, the sports medicine world still doesn't have a definitive answer on what shin splints is. The prevailing theory is that the soft tissue around your shin bone slowly pulls and tugs on the bone. The muscles connect to your shin bone via a very thin layer of tissue. This tissue wraps around the entirety of the bone. The pulling of this thin layer of soft tissue around your bone is believed to cause shin pain.

Regardless of the exact internal mechanism of shin splints, we know that working on the soft tissues that connect to your shin bone is very powerful (and painful :). Below are some of my favorite exercises for this type of pain.

Posterior Tibialis Release



Anterior Tibialis Release



Calf Smash



Triplanar Dorsiflexion + voodoo band!



You can add a floss band or voodoo band for this exercise as well. Wrap the band tightly around the shin starting from the top of the ankle to mid shin. The voodoo band make a huge difference.

If you are experiencing shin pain when training, running, or even just living your life. Perform a few of these exercises a few times a day. Many times modifying your training will also help reduce tension for the time being while the exercises help mobilize your tissues. Shoes are also an issue that needs to be considered. Consider how many miles you have in shoes and if you've recently changed shoes prior to your pain.

Wahhhhh, nothing helps!!!

If nothing helps or only helps for a short period of time, I suggest you seek out a health professional that is experience treating runners. A good clinician will try to avoid shutting you down and will find modifications for your activity. A good clinician will always combine manual therapy work with exercises and rehab for your injury. Take care of your pain before it shuts you down and you have stop your training cycle.