

Shin Pain



What is shin pain?

Shin pain is a very common complaint among athletes. Pain generally occurs in one or more of three structures. These structures include:

Bone

The leg bone may experience continuous stress resulting in possible stress fracture.

Muscles

Can be "overused" causing swelling and pain.

Bony Lining

This is called the tenoperiosteum. This is the point at which the muscles insert into the bone. The muscular insertions can become inflamed and painful.

The podiatrist must first determine where the pain is coming from. This is done through a series of clinical tests and sometimes x-rays or bone scans may be needed. Following diagnosis, appropriate treatment is then implemented.

What causes it?

One of the major causes of shin pain in all areas (bone, bony lining and muscles) is incorrect foot and leg alignment during walking and running. Incorrect positioning of the foot and leg leads to poor shock absorption and therefore increased stress on the bone. Abnormal positioning of the feet and legs can also cause muscle fatigue and overuse result-

ing in inflammation of tendons. Other causes of shin pain include training errors, poor conditioning, incorrect footwear and training on hard surfaces.

How is it treated?

- i. Orthoses help to correct foot and leg malalignments.
- ii. Exercises - stretching and strengthening of muscles may be advised.
- iii. Training errors are addressed.
- iv. Footwear is addressed.
- v. Changes in terrain may be indicated especially when training for particular sports or on uneven surfaces.
- vi. The podiatrist may suggest specialized massage techniques (deep soft tissue therapy and transverse frictioning).
- vii. Occasionally, rest may be indicated especially when bony stress fractures are present. Stress fractures can require between 4-8 weeks on crutches. During this time swimming, cycling and water running are often advised to maintain fitness levels.