BEAT SHIN SPLINTS IN FOUR WEEKS
TREAT YOUR RUNNING INJURIES WITHIN ONE MONTH BY FOLLOWING THIS STEP-BY-STEP REHABILITATION AND TRAINING PLAN

Meet the expert
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SHIN SPLINTS or Medial Tibial Stress Syndrome (MTSS) is quite a common problem among athletes, especially endurance athletes. MTSS is often described as a diffuse, dull ache along the border of the shin, normally worse after running or weight-bearing activity. Shin pain is often difficult to treat as there are so many factors that contribute to the pain, making every individual’s diagnosis and treatment plan different.

If you are experiencing ongoing shin pain, the most important thing to do is to consult a physiotherapist to rule out more serious problems, like stress fracture or compartment syndrome. Your physiotherapist can then identify why you have pain. The most common risk factors are:

- Reduced muscular endurance around the shin
- Excessive range and speed of foot pronation (rolling in of the foot on impact with the road)
- Training errors/changes
- Incorrect footwear
- Poor muscle function around the hip and knee, causing overloading of the shin

As shin pain is normally associated with impact – particularly running on hard surfaces – your swimming and cycling training should be pain-free and therefore you’re fine to continue as normal. If you do find even these sessions painful, you can easily reduce the load by removing the push off the wall when swimming and staying in the saddle during your rides.

This four-week rehabilitation plan focuses on your return to running and, at each stage of the plan, you should be pain-free before progressing the load. There are six rehab exercises described in the four-week plan – don’t be tempted to skip any of them. Feel free to swap the days around to suit your timetable, listen to your body and progress at your own pace.

How it works
Get your guide ready to go

- Cut out the guide following the dotted outline
- Fold the guide in quarters using the fold guides
- Now carry it with you for reference while training

Are these plans for you?
This plan is right for you if you:
- Don’t have a goal race in the next six weeks
- Are in regular training
- Want to focus on your rehabilitation

Your Skin Pain Exercises

Exercise 1 (Backwards)
Stand upright with your back and legs straight. Pull your toes up and tuck your heel up to work the muscles in the back of your shin. Hold for 10 seconds and relax. You may feel a little uncomfortable at first, but your calf muscles should get used to the new exercise.

Exercise 2 (circles)
Imagine a chalk circle on the floor. Walk with your back and legs straight, alternately stepping circularly around the chalk circle. Keep your body straight. You may feel a little uncomfortable at first, but your calf muscles should get used to the new exercise.

Photos: Corbis; Getty Images
Illustrations: Ben Foxall, Phil Nicodemi

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Your Shin Pain Exercises

**EXERCISE 1**

**TOE RAISES**

Stand against a wall with your back and legs straight. Pull your toes and forefoot up to work the muscle in the front of the shin. This might be uncomfortable at first, particularly if you’ve been suffering shin splints for a while, but persevere and the pain will eventually lessen.

**EXERCISE 2**

**ARCH RAISING/LOWERING**

Stand on a step with your big toe and arch resting at the edge. Control your foot as you slowly let the arch of your foot drop down. Work the tibialis posterior (one of the smaller muscles at the back of the calf) by pulling the arch of the foot back up into position. The strengthening of this muscle is important to help control of pronation of the foot while running, which is one of the most common causes of shin splints as well as numerous other running problems.

**EXERCISE 3**

**CALF STRETCH**

Stand with one leg in front of the other, with both feet pointed forwards. Keep the back leg straight, with the heel pressed into the floor. Repeat with the back knee bent. Hold until you feel the stretch release off slightly. Repeat on the other leg.

**EXERCISE 4**

**BENT-LEG CALF RAISES**

Stand on a step holding on to a wall for support. Maintain a slight bend in the knee. Rise up onto your tip-toes, hold for a few seconds, then slowly lower back down again. Try to use the full range of the muscle and keep the foot in a neutral alignment. This exercise will primarily work the soleus, the postural muscle of the calf, which is important for endurance running and control around the ankle when running.
**EXERCISE 5**  
**STRAIGHT-LEG CALF RAISES**  
This is very similar to the calf raise exercise on the previous page, but this time you need to keep your leg straight throughout. Stand on a step, holding on to a wall for support. Rise up onto your tip-toes, hold this position for a few seconds then slowly lower back down again. Try to use the full range of the muscle by keeping the movement controlled and keeping your foot in a neutral alignment throughout the exercise.

**WEEK 01**  
**Rest** from weight-bearing activity.  
Locate and manage pain.

**WEEK 02**  
**Aqua-jogging session** 20x60sec efforts with 15sec rest (30min total).

**WEEK 03**  
Shin muscle strengthening to fatigue on aqua jogging days.

**WEEK 04**  
Running every other day, daily stretching and shin muscle strengthening to fatigue.

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**EXERCISE 6**  
**FOAM ROLLER CALF MASSAGE**  
Loosening the muscles in your calf can help take the strain off your shins. To do this, sit with a foam roller under your calf, stacking one foot on top of the other so that you can massage one leg at a time. Lean back and support your bodyweight with your hands and roll the length of the calf backwards and forwards over the foam roller. Alter the angle of your leg to target the outside and inside of the muscle.

**WEEK 01**  
Rest.

**WEEK 02**  
Bent- and straight-leg calf stretch.  
Foam roller soft tissue release to the calf.

**WEEK 03**  
**Aqua-jogging session** 15x45sec efforts with 15sec rest (15min total).

**WEEK 04**  
Aqua-jogging session 4x5mins efforts with 60sec rest.