

# Good Muscular Health

Professional soft tissue injury prevention and management

February, 2008



## Lower leg pain

Okay now that the Christmas period is over, and even the school teachers are back to work. Who has started some exercise to get rid of those festive kilos that seem to appear miraculously this time, every year?

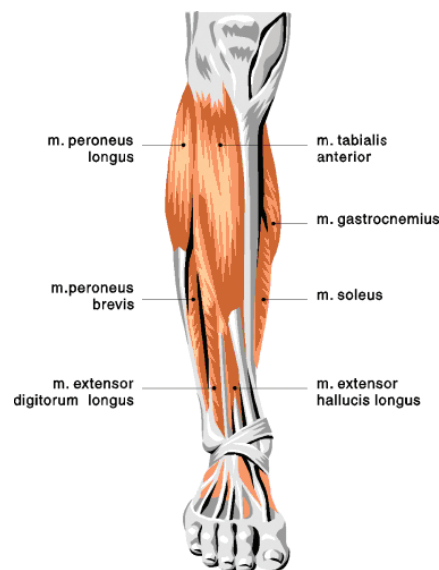
Now of those who said yes how many of you have suffered from pain in one or both of your legs (below the knee and above your ankle) after exercise? If you have said yes again then you may have the start of what is commonly known as Shin Splints.

### So what are shin splints?

"Shin splints" is the general name given for pain at the front of the lower leg. However "Shin splints" is not an actual diagnosis but rather a description of a group of symptoms in the lower leg. There are number of causes of these symptoms, the most common being inflammation of the periosteum of the tibia. (Periosteum is the sheath surrounding the bone). When the muscles that insert along the tibia (shin bone) become tight they cause a pulling force on the periosteum, which results in Inflammation followed by Pain.

### Symptoms of shin splints may include:

- Tenderness over the inside of the shin.
- Lower leg pain, which is often worse during or after exercise
- Pain when the toes or foot are bent downwards
- Swelling around the lower leg
- Redness over the inside of the shin
- Tight lower leg muscles



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## Range of causes

Shin splints can be caused by a number of factors related to the muscles, tendons and bones of the lower leg. The combination of these factors will result in shin symptoms. These factors include:

**OVERUSE** – exercising too hard, or increasing training intensity too quickly can cause excessive strain to the muscles, tendons, bones and joints of the lower leg. Overuse is one of the most common causes of shin splints.

**TECHNIQUE** – poor running technique, such as ‘rolling’ the feet inwards (pronation) or flat feet, can place extra strain the muscles and tendons.

**HIGH IMPACT** – the impact of running on hard or uneven surfaces can injure the muscles and tendons around the lower leg and considering we are in a drought this is a common problem we see in the clinic. The repetitive action of running long distances on the road or training involving rapid change in direction on hard courts are common causes of shin splints.

**RUNNING SHOES** – wearing the wrong type of shoe for the activity you are participating in, especially worn or poorly cushioned footwear therefore exercising in appropriate footwear for your feet in a must! If you wear your shoes out unevenly across the heel get a biomechanical analysis of your feet immediately you may need corrective orthotics.

## How you can treat shin splints by yourself

- Rest. The sooner you rest the sooner it will heal
- Apply ice in the early stages when it is very painful. Cold therapy reduces pain and inflammation
- Wear supportive and correct footwear
- Maintain fitness with non- weight bearing exercises such as cycling or swimming to reduce the strain on the muscles in the lower leg
- Return to activities gradually

## How your Myotherapist can help

- Identifying aggravating factors to help reduce the incidence of re-occurrence
- Assessment of muscle imbalances in the lower leg and foot
- Soft tissue massage to the lower leg muscles involved to reduce excessive muscular tone
- Dry Needling active trigger points to reduce excessive muscular tone
- Prescription of flexibility and strengthening exercises or an alternative training routine
- Provide an appropriate referral if symptoms persist

So dont let the pain of Shin Splints interrupt your exercise routine if you have these symptoms, there is help available! Call the gate house to make an appointment, as an AMW therapist is available on site, every fortnight.



Treatment

Orthotics

Correct Footwear