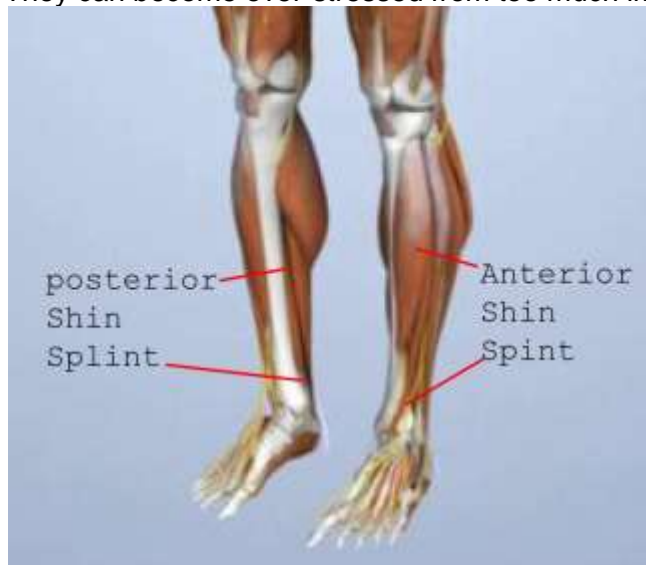


## Reducing Running Pains

You have a new goal. You want to run a marathon. You just bought a new pair of sneakers a month ago. However, you don't want to use them, because they will look worn and old if you run in them. You look in your closet to see if you have any old sneakers. Ah, there are a pair of old cross-trainers from last year. They will do. You decide to run 5 miles today. The first five minutes of your run you start to feel your shins tighten up. But you push through anyway and you make it through the 5 miles. You are determined to run 5-7 miles a day. The next day you put your cross trainers on again. From the first couple of steps you can feel that your shins are a little sore. You say to yourself, "that's normal. My body is simply adjusting to running". By day five the shin pain has become so severe that you have to stop running after 10 minutes. You realize that something is wrong. You think that maybe you are not cut out for running long distances. You tell your friend, who has been an avid runner for many years, about it. He tells you that you probably have shin splints and that he had similar symptoms in the past. He recommends that you stretch your calves before and after you run. You take a couple of days off and implement your friend's suggestion. You are able to run for 15 minutes before feeling pain, but you still can barely make it past that first mile. You say to yourself, "I give up. I can't do it. I am getting older and breaking down."

I want to say this to you. Do not give up. You are not breaking down. Your friend is most likely right. You are suffering from shin splints, which are treatable. There are two types of shins splints: Anterior shin splints and posterior shin splints.

Anterior shin splints generate pain from the middle to lower third of your shin and just lateral (toward the outside) of your shin (tibia) bone. The muscles in this region: the anterior tibialis, extensor hallucis longus, and digitorum longus attach to your tibia and help to absorb shock. They can become over-stressed from too much impact shock.



To reduce the amount of stress on these muscles you need to get rid of those old sneakers and purchase a new pair of high quality running shoes. Sneakers lose their shock absorption properties as they go through wear and tear, which means that your ankles, knees, and spine have to bear more impact shock. A new pair of running shoes can help reduce the stress on all of these joints and provide a much more pleasant running experience. Many of my patients have reported that their running pain resolved shortly after buying new sneakers. If replacing your sneakers does not correct the problem you should see your healthcare provider for an examination.

Posterior shin splints produce pain on the medial (inner) side of your shin. They involve the tibialis posterior, flexor hallucis longus, and flexor digitorum longus muscles. These muscles attach to the back of the tibia and play a crucial role as ankle stabilizers. They can become overstressed from hyperpronation of the foot. How can you tell if your feet are hyperpronating? It is best to be evaluated by a healthcare professional. However, you can ask a friend to look at your feet when you are standing. If the arch of your feet become flat or near flat when you stand then they may be pronating excessively. A healthcare professional can look at the wear pattern of your soles to determine if you may be hyperpronating. Purchasing a pair of custom made foot orthotics will help to maintain your foot arches and reduce posterior shin splints. Foot orthotics can also help with anterior shin splints, because many are made with material that absorb shock. These can be purchased from your podiatrist or chiropractor.

In addition to replacing your running shoes and acquiring foot orthotics, you should also rest and ice your leg. Your healthcare provider may prescribe exercises and apply elastic kinesio tape for support while running.

This article is not meant to diagnose or treat any medical condition. If you are experiencing symptoms, you should contact a healthcare professional for a proper evaluation.

Side Bar: How often should you change your running shoes?

You should change your running shoes between 300-400 miles of running. Depending on a person's weight the distance can be lower or higher (someone who is 100 lbs may be able to go 500-600 miles before replacing their sneakers). Also, joint conditions such as arthritis (anywhere from the feet to the spine) can lower the distance at which replacement is necessary. Another method for determining when to replace your sneakers is to keep a log of your miles. Note at what point you start to feel pain or discomfort and subtract 20 miles. In my opinion, this is the better method, because it is specific to you. Happy Running!