

What Are Shin Splints?

Your teenage soccer player is complaining of pain in her shins after a vigorous game against a rival team. You've heard of shin splints, but you aren't exactly sure what they are—or what you should do to help.

"The term 'shin splints' is often used as a generic description for pain in the lower legs that occurs during activity," says Mark Halstead, MD, primary care sports medicine physician at St. Louis Children's Hospital. "The more technical term for shin splints is medial tibial stress syndrome. It can be caused by several different problems or a combination of a few issues."

Dr. Halstead explains that the most common sources of pain are from stresses to the lining of the bone (known as the periosteum) or the deeper calf muscle known as the soleus.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Luckily, parents can usually treat shin splints at home.

"The best options for treatment of shin splints are resting, stretching the calf muscles, icing the shin, and avoiding higher impact activities, such as running and jumping, until your child's condition improves," Dr. Halstead says. "However, it's also important to remember that shin pain that continues to worsen and hurts during normal daily activity is often not shin splints and should be evaluated by a pediatrician."

For more information or to find an orthopedic specialist at St. Louis Children's Hospital, visit www.StLouisChildrens.org or www.progresswesthealthcare.org.

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A PUBLICATION OF CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL AT PROGRESS WEST

Packing Good Health

With summer winding down, you may be wondering what to pack for your child's school lunches this year, especially if your busy lifestyle sometimes makes planning ahead difficult. Fortunately, you can pack lunches that are both simple and healthy with minimal planning.

"Many parents tend to pack a lot of empty calorie foods, including potato chips, fruit roll-ups, and juice," says Tara Todd, registered dietitian at St. Louis Children's Hospital. "It's important that kids have a well-balanced and nutrient-rich lunch at school. I recommend choosing four items to create your child's lunch: a protein, a fruit or vegetable, a dairy product, and a whole-grain food item."

SATISFY PICKY TASTE BUDS

Remember these healthy lunch ideas when your child heads back to school:

- flour tortillas spread with low-fat refried beans and cheese
- fresh vegetables

- fruits with low-fat yogurt or dip
 - low-fat cheese and crackers
 - muffins made with carrots, raisins, zucchini, or other fruits and vegetables
 - whole grain cereal
 - yogurt parfaits with fruit and granola
- "St. Louis Children's Hospital's *Apples to Zucchini* class at Progress West HealthCare Center guides parents through the process of providing their children with good nutrition," Todd says. "During the class, we discuss everything from portion sizes to meal planning to parenting skills."

For more information about the *Apples to Zucchini* class at Progress West, visit www.progresswesthealthcare.org.



“But I don’t want to go to bed!” If this sounds like your child, it’s time to end the nighttime battle over going to sleep.



Say Goodnight to Bedtime Tantrums

Establishing a short routine

prior to bedtime can help you and your child stay on the right track.

“When a child has a bedtime routine, it helps him or her slow down and prepare for a night of sleep,” says Sharon Rau, community education instructor at St. Louis Children’s Hospital. “This starts by determining when your child needs to get up in the morning. Count backwards 10 to 11 hours from that time, and you have identified the best bedtime for your child.”

ROUTINE TIPS

Rau says even a simple bedtime routine each night can help your son or daughter exhibit fewer nighttime tantrums. Activities including taking

a bath, reading a story, or brushing teeth can all serve as signals that it’s time to sleep. Creating a good sleep atmosphere is important as well. Trade in the stimulating sounds of the television and bright lights for softly playing music and a nightlight or lamp.

“It’s never too late to change your child’s sleep habits,” Rau says. “Establishing a set bedtime and sleep routine can be challenging, but very important to ensuring your child gets enough sleep.”

Need more sleep help? St. Louis Children’s Hospital offers the Sleep A to Zzz class that helps parents create a sleep routine their child can maintain. Visit www.StLouisChildrens.org for more information, or call 314.454.KIDS (5437).

Getting Kids Off the Couch

Kids naturally play hard. Help get your kids off the couch and back in touch with their inner athlete with daily activities that are fun and healthy.

If you worry about your child’s lack of physical activity, lecturing from the computer or couch sends the wrong message. By participating in regular physical activity, parents can set a good example that children will be happy to follow. Other ways to encourage your children to get moving include limiting screen time, making physical activity part of the daily routine, allowing your child to choose favorite ways to get moving, and focusing on fun, active pastimes for special occasions.

“Exercise does not have to be a chore,” says Heather Ruble, BS, HSS, certified exercise specialist at St. Louis Children’s Hospital. “Walking the dog, playing a sport, or taking a walk as a family is fun and helps provide the physical activity we all need. It is recommended that adults obtain three to five 30-minute sessions

of aerobic activity per week and children should be getting at least an hour of activity every day. By incorporating physical activities into family time, it is an easy and fun way to get the required amount of daily exercise.”

BRIDGING THE DISCONNECT

Ruble leads a program, *Head to Toe*, for parents and children to learn the basics of

nutrition and physical activity for a healthier lifestyle. The 10-week program is a hands-on approach to help educate and motivate kids and their families to take a more active role in their health.

For more information about how to help your kids live a healthier lifestyle through programs, such as Head to Toe, visit www.StLouisChildrens.org.

