D. Andrew Parker, MD
OrthoVirginia
1850 Town Center Parkway, Suite 400
Reston, VA 20190
(703) 810-5202

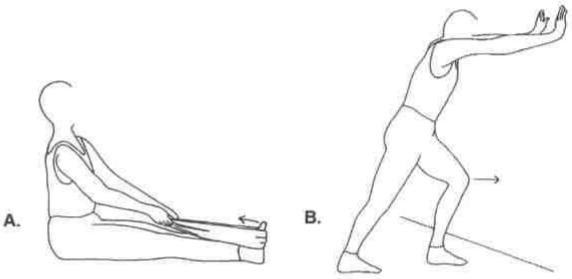
Shin Pain (Shin Splints) Rehabilitation Exercises

Start these exercises when your pain has decreased by about 25% from the time when your injury was most painful.

1. Calf stretch

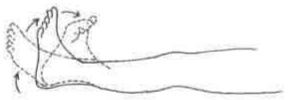
A. Calf stretch with towel: Sitting on a firm surface with your injured leg straight in front of you, take a towel and loop it around the ball of your foot. Pull the towel toward you. Hold this position for 30 seconds. Relax. Repeat 3 times. When you don't feel much of a stretch anymore using the towel, start stretching the calf in the standing position described below.

B. Standing calf stretch: Facing a wall, place both hands at about eye level on the wall. Keep your uninjured leg forward and your injured leg back about 12 to 18 inches behind your uninjured leg. Keep your injured leg straight and your heel on the floor. Next, do a slight lunge by bending the knee of the forward leg. Lean into the wall until you feel a stretch in your calf muscle. Hold this for 30 to 60 seconds. Repeat 3 times.



Calf stretch

2. Active range of motion of the ankle: Sitting or lying down with your legs straight and your knee toward the ceiling, move your ankle up and down, in and out, and in circles. Don't bend your knee while doing this. Repeat 20 times in each direction. Push hard in all directions.


Active range of motion of the ankle

Anterior compartment stretch

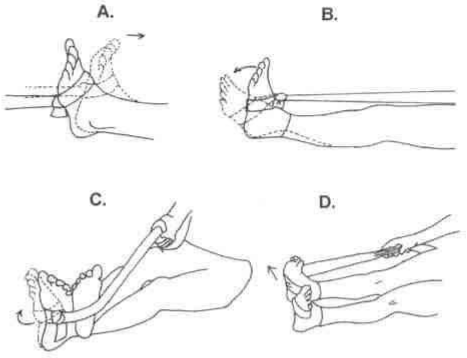
3. Anterior compartment stretch: Stand with one hand against a wall or chair for balance. Bend your knee and grasp the front of the foot of your injured leg. Bend the front of the foot toward the heel. You should feel a stretch in the front of your shin. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 10 times.

4. Thera-Band strengthening exercises for the lower leg

A. Resisted dorsiflexion flexion: Sit in front of a doorway with your legs outstretched. Anchor the Thera-Band in a door by tying knots in the ends and closing the knots in the door. Next, loop the Thera-Band around the forefoot of your injured leg. Pull your foot toward your face with the Thera-Band supplying resistance. Return slowly to the starting position. Repeat 10 times. Do 3 sets of 10.

Shin Pain (Shin Splints) Rehabilitation Exercises

B. Resisted plantar flexion: Sitting with your legs outstretched, put the tubing around the foot of your injured leg and hold the ends of the tubing in your hands. Gently press your foot down stretching the Thera-Band. Return to the starting position. Repeat 10 times. Do 3 sets of 10.

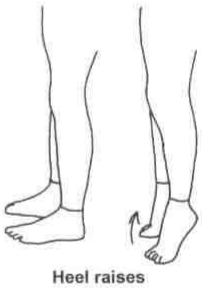


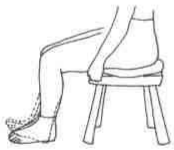
Thera-Band strengthening exercises for the lower leg

C. Resisted inversion: Sit on the floor with your uninjured leg crossed over your injured ankle. Hold one end of the Thera-Band in your hand and tie the other end in a loop. Place the loop around the forefoot of the injured leg and have the band wrapped around the uninjured foot to provide an anchor. Move your injured foot inward with the Thera-Band providing resistance. Return your foot to the starting position. Repeat 10 times. Do 3 sets of 10.

D. Resisted eversion: Sitting on the floor with both legs straight out, have the Thera-Band looped around both feet. Slowly turn the injured foot outward, keeping the uninjured foot still. Return to the starting position. Repeat 10 times. Do 3 sets of 10.

5. Heel raises: Balance yourself while standing behind a chair or counter. Raise your body up onto your toes, then slowly lower it. Repeat 10 times. Do 2 sets of 10.


Heel raises


Sitting toe raise

6. Toe raises
   A. Sitting: Sit on a firm surface with your feet flat on the floor. Keep your heel on the floor and raise your toes off the floor. Repeat 10 times. Do 3 sets of 10. When the sitting exercise becomes easy, progress to standing, as described below.
   B. Standing: Standing with your feet flat on the floor, rock back onto your heels and lift your toes off the floor. Hold this for 5 seconds. Repeat 10 times. Do 3 sets of 10.

Standing toe raise

© HBO & Company

The Sports Medicine Patient Advisor
Pierre Rouzier, MD
HBO and Company, 1999