

Rehab Exercises for Shin Splints

One of the reasons for shin splints is a weakness in the muscles in the front of the lower leg. An imbalance between these muscles and their antagonists, the powerful calf muscles can also be an issue.

Here are some exercises you can use to strengthen the muscles of the anterior lower leg muscles. You can use them as an alternative or supplement to the exercises described in Training-Room Tips article in PE Digest, Winter'95.

Toe Taps

This is an excellent exercise because it requires no equipment and can be performed anywhere. There are two variations.

Standing Version

The standing version puts more of a load on the shin muscles. Have your students stand with their back against a wall and their feet on the floor, about two feet from the wall. They lift their toes as high as possible, while keeping their heels on the floor (dorsiflexion). The movement is quick—just a quick tap on the ground, then back up. Start with 10—12 repetitions, and gradually progress to 3 sets of 15. To further increase the effectiveness of the exercise, finish it with an isometric repetition, in which you lift and hold as long as possible. For further progression, work each leg individually.

Sitting Version

This version of the toe-tap exercise is basically the same, except it is performed while sitting. The advantage to sitting toe-taps is that it can be performed while sitting in class, watching television, sitting on a bus, studying, etc.

Toe-tapping and figure-eight exercises for the prevention and rehabilitation of shin splints.



Standing Toe Taps



The movement is the same, lift the toes while keeping the heels planted. Perform quick movements, then complete each set with an isometric repetition in which the toe is lifted and held. If the tapping noise is an annoyance (i.e. during a class), tell your students they can extend and lift their legs so their feet are off the ground, and perform the exercise in this position.

Figure Eights

Perform this exercise with surgical tubing. Place a loop tied at the end of the tubing over the foot and move backwards until there is tension. Then draw Figure-Eights with your foot, moving your foot and ankle in as large a range of motion as possible. Sets and repetitions are the same as with toe-taps.



Sitting Toe Taps

References:

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