

5. Don't get stressed out of running - Jason Brumit

At the start of every new year many runners of all skill levels will lace up their shoes and hit the road running to improve their fitness or aerobic endurance levels. Running however is not without its risks. Many runners skilled and less skilled are at risk of numerous running related overuse injuries with improper training. One particular overuse injury the stress fracture.

What is a stress fracture?

A stress fracture is an overuse injury caused when the body is unable to repair bone in response to repetitive strain. Unlike traumatic fractures, stress fractures may result from either repetitive overloading to the bone or from muscle forces stressing the bone beyond its tolerance point.

Recognition and treatment.

Many factors may contribute to the development of a stress fracture (Table 1). Initially the individual will experience only the onset of mild pain near the end of a run. This is the key symptom that endurance athletes need to recognize, but often ignore. Because the symptoms initially are not experienced at rest, the athlete attempts to “ work through the pain”. Continuing to run at this stage will ultimately make the stress fracture worse. As symptoms worsen, the runners experiences pain throughout the run and at rest. The runners at this point should have had a professional medical examination and started on at least an eight week rest.

What can you do?

Prevention is the key. Due to the fact that there are many factors contributing to the development of a stress fracture, sports medicine researchers have yet to develop the perfect program to reduce injury risk.

Prevention tips:

- Wear a comfortable shoe, that helps to correct any biomechanical foot issues.
- Gradually progress your training mileage and intensity.
- Maintain flexibility of the low back, hip flexors, quadriceps, hamstrings and gastrocnemius muscles.

Table 1

Factors contributing to stress fractures:

- High weekly mileage.
- Rapid increase in mileage or intensity of run.

- Old or poor quality foot wear.
- Hard or uneven training surface.
- Gender (Woman have a higher incidence of stress fractures than men)
- Ethnicity (White and asian individuals have a higher incidence of stress fractures).
- Poor general conditioning prior to training program.
- Low bone mineral density.
- Biomechanical malalignment of the lower extremities.
- Delayed menarche or menstrual disturbance.
- Poor nutrition.

Stress fractures should not be an issue with athletes as it can and should be prevented with a proper planned training program and with continuous feedback to the coach, this type of injury will not be a problem.