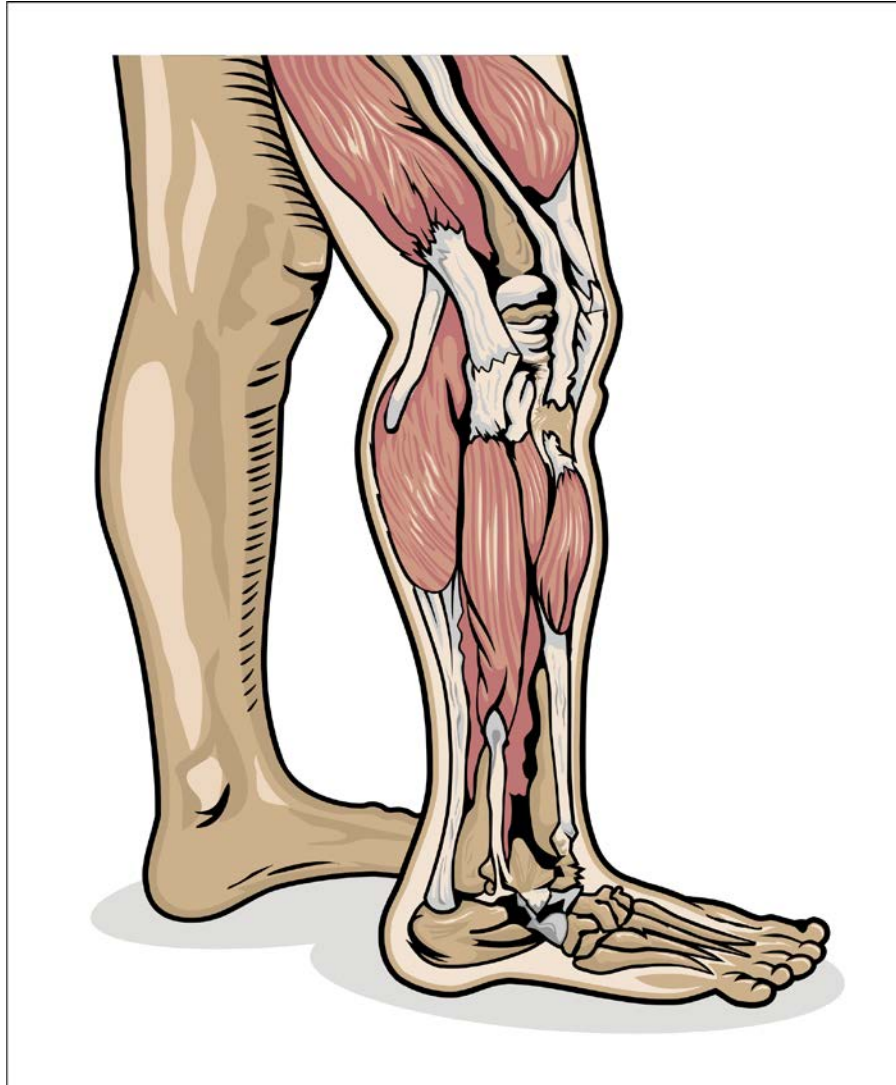


Shins

The Dead Zone

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Imagine if you are a runner and you have run perhaps hundreds of miles in your lifetime. Ten miles a week running adds up to over five-hundred miles per year. After a couple of decades that now ends up being thousands of miles of pounding on your body. The same could be said for avid tennis players, hikers or other competitive athletes.

When upright and running the shins take the brunt of the force being exerted. The shins and the knees become the shock absorbers for the body when one is engaged in running, hiking or jumping. The shins are a commoner's term for the area from the knee to the top of the foot. Due to a lifetime of athleticism, many people suffer from maladies that either begin in the shins or end up in the shins. The shins might as well be considered the "dead zone" because of the normal abuse taken by the shins and the lack of awareness by most to the shin area.

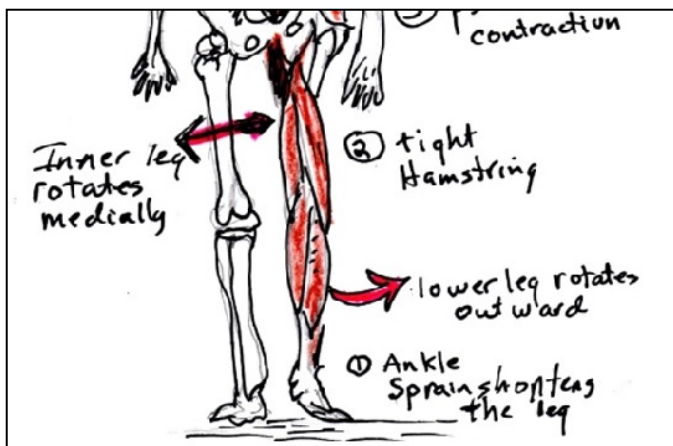
Some of the problems associated with tight shins include bunions, ankle sprains, pronation, eversion, plantar fasciitis, shin splints, weakness, swelling, pain and lack of mobility. For most people the shin muscles are glued together to a point of no return. This area remains frozen and lifeless and adds to many anatomical complications like arthritic knees, swollen legs and ankle pain.

The lower leg muscles are comprised of several individual muscles. The primary muscles of the calf and shin area are the following:

Gastocnemius, Soleus, Anterior Tibialis, Posterior Tibialis, Peronius Longus, Peronius Brevis, Extensor Digitorum Longus, Extensor Digitorum Brevis, Extensor Hallucis Longus, Flexor Hallucis Longus, Flexor Digitorum Longus and the Peronius Tertius.

Most people pay a great amount of attention to their arms, chest and abdominal muscles, almost to the extreme. Very few people give any attention to the shin area. This is why I refer to the shins and calves as the "dead zone." After years of pounding and abuse the shins are almost always neglected and forgotten about. Any attempt at recognition is almost always concerned with strengthening the area. The problem is that the shins are already too tight and need flexibility and release and not more hardening. You cannot correct an already tightened area by adding more strength to it. This is like throwing gasoline on a burning building hoping to put the fire out.

Once the various shin muscles tighten the fascia (a form of



connective tissue) will harden and glue together. This is a process called hydrogen bonding. The fascia is like saran wrap that envelops in and around muscle fibers. Once the muscles fuse together because of the hardened fascia then it is very difficult to release. An injury to the area, like a sprained ankle, broken bone or torn

ligament, will create further imbalances as the hardened tissues will prevent the injury site from healing completely. You might end up walking with a limp, have foot or ankle pain, shin splints or a painful knee. This is no different than a car that has its front end alignment off resulting in severely worn tires. Bunions are also another sign that the shin muscles are imbalanced

Tight shins often lead to a lower leg that will rotate outward. As the lower leg rotates outward the upper leg will often try to compensate and rotate inward. The joints of the body will wear down as the leg remains rotated, often leading to hip or back problems.

The lower body of the human frame can be equated to the foundation of a building. If a foundation is created that is imbalanced or if the underlying sediment begins to sink or shift the entire building will be affected. Cracks in the building might develop. The building might begin to lean a few inches or feet to one side. At one point the building might be declared unsafe because of the imbalances created from the foundation.

The shins and ankles of the human body are no different. As the shins tighten one might begin to walk on the outside of the foot causing strain to develop up in the knee area. Spirals in the lower leg might radiate upwards to create back pain, sciatica or even organ imbalances like prostate issues. As the lower body becomes even more distorted the upper areas will begin to feel the affects.

Start to become aware of how you stand and how you walk. Notice how your shoes wear if one side is more worn down than the other side. Pay attention to any pain or discomfort that the shins might be creating for you. Begin to awaken the chronic dead zone of the body. Ways to open the shins are through targeted movement like yoga or movement therapy along with connective tissue bodywork that begins to break down the fascial adhesions that have built up. This might be a slow and steady process as the tightness was not created overnight.

Make your shins important for they carry with them a great impact on the rest of your body. Neglecting your shins might lead to arthritic joints, knee or hip replacements or a life of chronic pain and imbalance. Bring attention to the shin area just as you would all other areas of your body. Your shins are not just a senseless area to absorb the shock of running or hiking: the shins hold the key to how well you hold yourself upright. In order to be balanced in your body you must be balanced from the ground up.