

Shinbone Fracture

The shinbone (tibia) is a commonly fractured bone. There are a number of fractures that can occur to the shinbone, including a tibial shaft fracture which is where the shinbone breaks through the middle. You can also fracture the shinbone at the ankle during an ankle fracture. Lastly, you could suffer a stress fracture to the shin from over-training or long distance running.

A tibial shaft fracture or shinbone fracture is one that occurs beneath the knee and above the ankle along the length of the tibial bone. The bone can fracture long ways, or across the width.

It generally takes a lot of force in order to break this bone and as a result, other injuries are also sustained in the process. Shin bone fractures always involve trauma, so are most commonly done on the sports field.

Shinbone (Tibia) Anatomy

The bottom part of the leg consists of two main bones, the fibula and the tibia. Out of those two bones, the tibia is the largest one. This bone is the one that will support most of the weight and it is an important part of both the ankle joint and the knee joint. There are many different ways that the tibia can be fractured. The amount of force that caused the break is generally the deciding factor in the severity of the break and it is not uncommon for the fibula to be broken at the same time.

Most shinbone fractures are caused by contact sports such as rugby, football, and martial arts. During tackles is a common time when the tibia can fracture, if another player mistimes their tackle and ends up striking the leg.

How to Treat a Shinbone Fracture:

There will be several things for the doctor to take into consideration when planning your course of treatment. These will include but are not limited to things like:

- What caused the injury
- What your overall health is like
- How severe the break is
- How much soft tissue damage has occurred

Based on that information as well as some other factors, the doctor may decide that your shinbone fracture can be treated non-surgically or he may decide that surgery is called for.

- **Non-surgical** treatment will deal with initial application of a splint to immobilize the leg. This is not like a cast in that you can loosen it or tighten it as the need arises. This method allows the swelling to recede naturally.
On the other hand, the doctor may decide that a plaster cast is called for. This is only initially and after a few weeks, this will be removed and replaced by a brace that is functional. The brace will provide what the bone needs for healing (support and protection) while allowing you to remove it for therapy and hygiene purposes.
- **Surgical** treatment is deemed necessary when the fracture is open and protruding through the skin or when it is unstable due to the being little pieces broken off or multiple breaks with large areas of the bone being displaced. It may also be needed when non-surgical treatments do not work. Treatment may involve screws, pins, a rod or a metal plate.

Tips:

There is no way to completely prevent bone fractures but here are some steps you can take to minimize them:

- Make sure that you are getting adequate amounts of both Vitamin D and calcium.
- To build stronger bones, do exercises of the weight bearing type.
- Always be sure to wear the proper safety equipment and padding when engaging in sports.
- Be careful with contact sports.
- Rehabilitate after the fracture. Strengthening exercises will help. Therapy can help reduce the pain or stiffness occurring after a fracture, or once a cast is removed.