

RUNNER'S WORLD

MEDICAL & TRAINING



ADVICE

EDITED BY BETH ECK

Tender Calf

Q: Recently I've had a great deal of pain in the upper part of my right calf. The pain has built up over a few weeks. Finally I took a week off, but the pain returned about 4 miles into my first run. Since then, I've been cross-training on my bicycle and haven't run for a while. Any ideas?

L.G., HOUSTON, TEX.

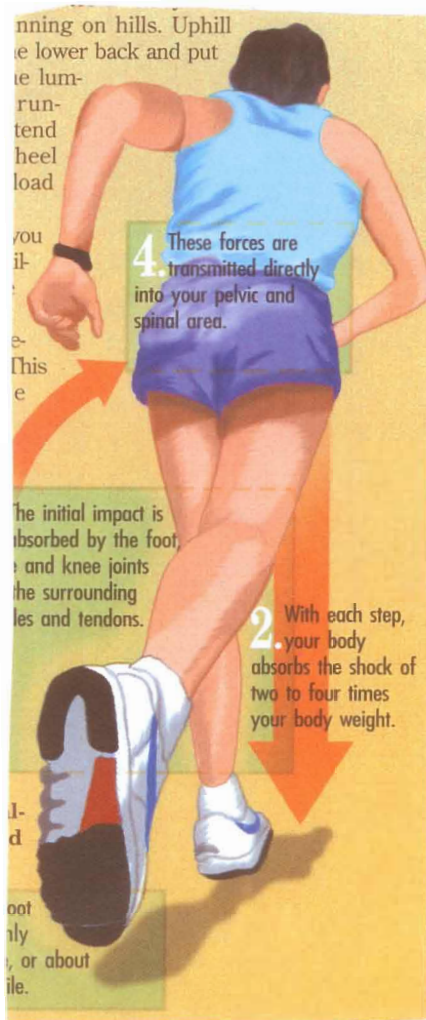
A: It sounds as if you may have a common soft-tissue overuse injury. My guess is that you've suffered a microtear in your calf muscle.

Why did this happen? **Overuse injuries can occur when you increase your distance and speed, change your running shoes or alter your training route (to hills or harder surfaces, for instance).** They also can develop due to flat feet, knock-knees, bowlegs or even a muscle imbalance.

For recovery, I suggest you continue your cross-training routine for three to six weeks. (If you tire of biking, stairclimbing and swimming are also good options.) Incorporate some walking several days a week (wearing your running shoes). Stretch your calves daily and use a heating pad a couple times a day for 10 minutes at a time to hasten healing. The best times to use heat are when you get out of bed in the morning and before exercising. You also might try deep-friction massage (to help ease any spasms or break up scar tissue), ice massage after exercising, and prescription heel lifts in your shoes.

You should be able to progress from fast walking to running in three to six weeks, depending on the severity of your tear. At some point, you may want to see a podiatrist, as he or she can help you find the cause of your overuse injury so you can avoid it in the future.

—Richard T. Braver, D.P.M., runner and podiatrist practicing in Englewood and Fair Lawn, N.J., a member of the AAOS and the American College of Podiatry's Medical Advisory Board



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4 These forces are transmitted directly into your pelvic and spinal area.

The initial impact is absorbed by the foot, knee and knee joints and the surrounding muscles and tendons.

2 With each step, your body absorbs the shock of two to four times your body weight.

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