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Lower Extremity Stress Fracture Protocol: Protocol 1

Phase I:

- Reduce your activity to remain asymptomatic for 10 -14 days.
- Total rest not necessary if extremity remains pain-free by eliminating the offending activity.
- A period of time non-weight bearing with crutches may be required if simple walking is painful.
- You may do other things to stay active as long as you have no pain while doing them. This includes pain that occurs after activity. Consider cross-training, bike, upper extremity conditioning, or other activities that do not place repetitive stress on your foot.

Phase II:

- The extremity must be pain free for 10 – 14 days before moving onto Phase II
- Once focal bony tenderness has completely resolved you may begin running at ½ your usual pace and ½ your distance.
- Start running every other day for the first 2 weeks then gradually increase running to preinjury level over the following 3 – 6 weeks increasing at approximately 10% per week. May increase by more BUT ONLY if pain free during and after activity.
- If symptoms recur rest for 1 – 2 days then resume at a pace and distance that is pain free.

Note: It may take between 4 - 16 weeks before return to full sporting activity depending on the severity of the stress fracture.

Adapted from:

Warden SJ et al. Journal of Orthopaedic & Sports Physical Therapy. 2014

Chen Y et al. Curr Rev Musculoskelet Med. 2013

Arendt E et al . American Journal of Sports Medicine. 2003