

# Keeping stress fractures at bay while keeping exercise resolutions

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Pledging to take up some type of regular exercise regimen is one of the most popular New Year's resolutions, and it's a good one at that ... as exercise is proven to stave off chronic health conditions, promote weight loss and better sleep, reduce stress and anxiety and increase mental clarity.

However, highly motivated resolvers should take note: A common resolution buster is the stress fracture—tiny cracks in the bone that can be caused by overuse, such as with repeatedly jumping up and down or running long distances.

"At the beginning of the year people tend to make drastic changes to their lifestyle. They want to run a marathon or get in shape for the summer, which is great; however, they need to increase their activity in a gradual and controlled manner," says Barton Branam, MD, a sports medicine specialist with UC Health and assistant professor of orthopedic surgery at the University of Cincinnati (UC) College of Medicine.

Stress fractures are more common in the lower extremities such as the shin bone, ankle and foot, and a telltale sign of a stress fracture is recurrent pain and swelling of a body part, which increases with the frequency and intensity of a particular [exercise](#).

While stress fractures can and do occur in the bones of a trained athlete—frequently when the athlete decides to kick their training up a notch—these fractures can be equally problematic for the sedentary person, who suddenly takes on exercise for the first time without varying their routine, says Branam.

"I tell patients that instead of jogging five or six days a week, they should alternate ... jog one or two days a week and on the other days get on the stair-climber, elliptical, stationary bike or in the pool."

Another preventive measure is to allow the body to rest between exercise sessions. When overtaxed, bones can become fatigued and fatigued bones are more susceptible to cracks. Also, a healthy balanced diet should not be underestimated.

Often the first course of treatment for a stress fracture is to allow the

body to heal itself with rest, ice and elevation. Some stress fractures; however, do not resolve themselves and require surgery.

Branam's recommendation is to start slow with any new exercise program and increase the intensity over time.

"A stress fracture is actually going to slow down your exercise plan for the New Year if you have to take significant time away from the exercise to heal."

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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