

## ACHILLES TENDON INJURY

### What is an Achilles tendon injury?

The Achilles tendon is a band of tissue that connects the heel bone to the calf muscle of the leg. Injury to the tendon may cause it to become inflamed or torn.

Achilles tendinopathy is an injury to your Achilles tendon from overuse. The term tendinopathy includes tendonitis and tendinosis. Achilles tendonitis is the term used when the tendon is inflamed. Tendinosis refers to tiny tears in the tendon. They both cause pain at the back of your leg by the heel.

### How does it occur?

Achilles tendinopathy can be caused by:

- overuse of the Achilles tendon
- tight calf muscles
- tight Achilles tendons
- lots of uphill running
- increasing the amount or intensity of sports training, sometimes along with switching to racing flats, which are racing shoes with less heel lift
- over-pronation, a problem where your feet roll inward and flatten out more than normal when you walk or run
- wearing high heels at work and then switching to lower-heeled shoes for exercise

An Achilles tendon may tear during sudden activity. For example the tendon might tear when you jump or start sprinting.

### What are the symptoms?

Achilles tendinopathy causes pain and may cause swelling over the Achilles tendon. The tendon is tender and may be swollen. You will have pain when you rise up on your toes and pain when you stretch the tendon. The range of motion of your ankle may be limited.

When the tendon tears or ruptures, you may feel a pop. If there is a complete tear, you will be unable to lift your heel off the ground or point your toes.

### How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will examine your leg, looking for tenderness and swelling. Your provider will watch your feet when you walk or run to see if you over-pronate.

### How is it treated?

- Put ice packs on the Achilles tendon for 20 to 30 minutes every 3 to 4 hours for the first 2 or 3 days or until the pain goes away.

- Raise your lower leg on a pillow when you are lying down.
- Take anti-inflammatory medicine as prescribed by your healthcare provider (adults aged 65 years and older should not take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicine for more than 7 days without their healthcare provider's approval)
- If your healthcare provider prescribes a heel lift insert for your shoe, wear it at least until your tendon heals and possibly longer. The lift prevents extra stretching of your Achilles tendon.
- While you are recovering from your injury, change your sport or activity to one that does not make your condition worse. For example, you may need to swim instead of run.
- Do any exercises your healthcare provider gives you to stretch and strengthen your Achilles tendon.
- If you over-pronate, your healthcare provider may recommend shoe inserts, called orthotics, to keep your foot stable. You can buy orthotics at a pharmacy or athletic shoe store or they can be custom-made.

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