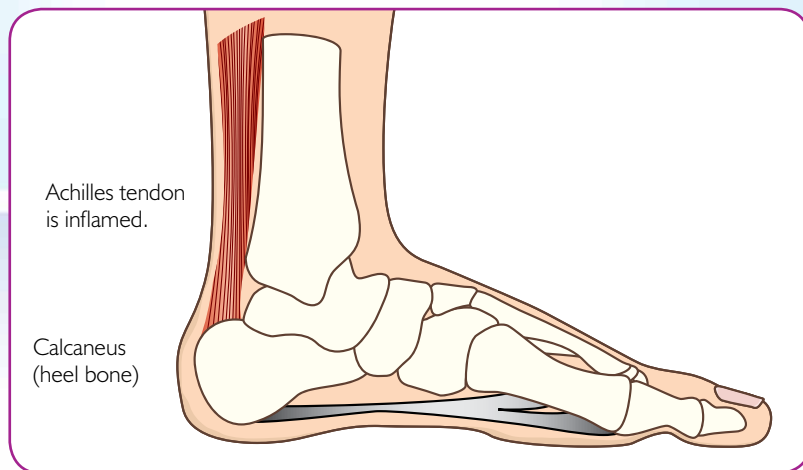


ACHILLES TENDINOPATHY



WHAT IS IT?

The Achilles tendon joins your calf muscle to the heel bone. Achilles tendinopathy is the term used to describe the degeneration of this tendon. It is a very common sporting injury (especially in runners) and

is caused by overloading the tendon during exercise causing microtrauma to the tendon. This causes pain and stiffness in the tendon and swelling around the tendon usually around 2-5 cm above the heel bone.

DIAGNOSIS

Your podiatrist will physically examine the tendon to identify the extent of the damage which will enable them to construct a treatment plan. It is really important to tell them if you remember a sudden and large amount of pain occurring, whether or not you heard a 'pop' sound or if you

have had difficulty walking as this might mean you have torn the tendon rather than just damaging it. Your podiatrist will also ask you about when the pain and stiffness occurs (during exercise or rest) and the type and level of exercise that you do.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Assuming the tendon is damaged rather than torn, the treatment should take 3-6 months to resolve the problem fully depending on the amount of damage done.

REST is the most important aspect of successfully treating achilles tendinopathy. This does not mean total rest but rest from the exercise that has caused the problem. Gentle or normal walking is still important to keep the ankle complex generally moving. Pain relief using paracetamol and/or ibuprofen should be used to reduce

any discomfort. If there is swelling present then compressive bandage and ice packs should be used in the short term to reduce this swelling. A full assessment of your biomechanics and foot type may be necessary to see if the way you walk or run has caused the problem. This might result in orthotic insoles or recommending specialist footwear. A simple heel raise in the shoe may be added in the short term during your rehabilitation. You will be given a set of exercises to carry out at home after the initial short rest period to retrain the tendon to stretch and to strengthen it.

Continued overleaf



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TREATMENT OPTIONS CONTINUED

It is very important that you carry out these exercises consistently to ensure the tendon heals properly and in a reasonable time frame. If the tendon is not rehabilitated properly you may put yourself at risk of re-injuring the site.

You may also be given a splint to wear at night

time to keep the tendon in a lengthened position overnight but this is again only a short term treatment option. In extreme cases, steroid injections or surgery might be required but this is only after months of other therapies first.

GENERAL FOOTCARE ADVICE

REGULAR WASHING

Feet should be washed daily in warm water and then dried gently with a soft towel. A sprinkling of soothing foot powder is helpful, especially between the toes.

VALUE OF MASSAGE

Massage will help tone up circulation and relax the muscles. Try contrast bathing by alternatively dipping the feet first in comfortably hot water for one minute and then cold water for twenty seconds for a total of ten minutes. Always finish with the cold dip.

CUT TOE NAILS REGULARLY

Keep toe nails trimmed to just over the tip of the toe and cut them straight across. Never cut around the corners as this may lead to ingrowing toe nails. Cut them at least once per month.