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## Achilles Tendonitis

### What is the Achilles tendon?

The Achilles tendon is a band of tissue that connects the heel bone to the calf muscle of the leg. An injury to this tendon can cause it to become inflamed or possibly tear.

Achilles Tendonitis is the term used when the tendon is inflamed. The inflammation causes pain at around the lower portion of your calf and near the heel. A tear of the tendon is called a rupture. This causes significant pain near the heel, along with loss of function.



<http://www.qs-health.com/blog/2012/06/achilles-tendonitis/>

### How does Achilles Tendonitis occur?

Achilles tendonitis can be caused by any of the following:

- Overuse of the Achilles tendon
- Tight calf muscles
- Tight Achilles tendon
- Uphill running
- Change in shoes that have less heel support
- Over-pronation, when your feet roll inward and flatten out
- Going from high heels to lowered heeled shoes

### What are the symptoms?

Achilles tendonitis causes pain and swelling over the Achilles tendon. The tendon may be tender to touch. You will have pain when you rise up on your toes and also when you stretch the tendon. Ankle range of motion may be limited due to pain.

### How is Achilles tendonitis diagnosed?

Your health care provider will examine your leg, looking for tenderness, swelling, or difficulty with ankle range of motion.

## **How do you treat Achilles tendonitis?**

- Ice for 20-30 minutes every 3-4 hours or after activity
- Anti-inflammatory medications (Ibuprofen, Aleve, Advil, Motrin, etc).
- Your health care provider may prescribe heel lift inserts. These should be worn until the tendonitis has resolved, if not longer. This lift prevents over stretching of the Achilles tendon.
- Activity modification. Trying to limit the activities that cause pain and modifying it with running, biking, or yoga.
- Consistent stretching and strengthening exercises that are prescribed by your health care provider.
- If you over pronate, your health care provider may suggest shoe inserts, called Orthotics. You can buy over the shelf orthotics at many sporting-good stores or pharmacies.
- With severe cases of Achilles tendonitis, a period of cast immobilization may be utilized to give complete rest to the foot and ankle.
- A tear to the tendon may require a surgical intervention, or the foot could be casted for 6-8 weeks.

## **How long does it take to recover?**

The length of recovery depends on many factors such as age, health, and if you have had a previous injury to this tendon. Recovery time also depends on the severity of the injury. A tendon that is only mildly inflamed and just started to hurt may improve in a few weeks. A tendon that is chronically inflamed and has been painful for a long time may take a few months to improve. You will need to stop doing the activities that cause pain until the tendon has healed. If you continue with these activities, your symptoms could worsen and it will take longer to recover.

## **When can I return to my activities?**

You may safely return to your normal activities when, starting from the top of the list and progressing to the end, each of the following is true:

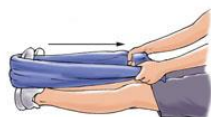
- You have full range of motion on the injured leg compared to the uninjured leg
- You have full strength of the injured leg compared to the uninjured leg
- You can walk straight ahead without pain or limping

When each of these is true, you should gradually return into activity. If you become sore again, you should take a couple days rest or modify the activity you are trying to return to.

## **How do I prevent Achilles tendonitis?**

The best way to prevent Achilles tendonitis and an Achilles tendon injury is to stretch your calf muscles and Achilles tendonitis before activities. If you have tight Achilles tendons or calf muscles, stretch them twice a day whether or not you are doing any sports activities that day. If you have a tendency to get Achilles tendonitis, try to avoid a lot of uphill running.

## Achilles Tendonitis Rehabilitation Exercises



Towel stretch



Standing calf stretch



Standing soleus stretch



Side-lying leg lift



Step-up



Heel raise



Balance and reach exercise A



Balance and reach exercise B

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### Achilles tendonitis Rehabilitation Exercises

- **Towel stretch:** Sit on a hard surface with one leg stretched out in front of you. Loop a towel around your toes and the ball of your foot and pull the towel toward your body keeping your knee straight. Hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds then relax. Repeat 3 times.
- **Standing calf stretch:** Facing a wall, put your hands against the wall at about eye level. Keep one leg back with the heel on the floor, and the other leg forward. Turn your back foot slightly inward (as if you were pigeon-toed) as you slowly lean into the wall until you feel a stretch in the back of your calf. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat 3 times and then switch the position of your legs and repeat the exercise 3 times. Do this exercise several times each day.
- **Standing soleus stretch:** Stand facing a wall with your hands on a wall at about chest level. With both knees slightly bent and one foot back, gently lean into the wall until you feel a stretch in your lower calf. Angle the toes of your back foot slightly inward and keep your heel down on the floor. Hold this for 15 to 30 seconds. Return to the starting position. Repeat 3 times.
- **Side-lying leg lift:** Lying on your uninjured side, tighten the front thigh muscles on your top leg and lift that leg 8 to 10 inches away from the other leg. Keep the leg straight and lower slowly. Do 3 sets of 10.
- **Step-up:** Stand with the foot of your injured leg on a support (like a small step or block of wood) 3 to 5 inches high. Keep your other foot flat on the floor. Shift your weight onto your injured leg on the support straighten your knee as the other leg comes off the floor. Lower your leg back to the floor slowly. Do 3 sets of 10.

- **Heel raise:** Balance yourself while standing behind a chair or counter. Using the chair to help you, raise your body up onto your toes and hold for 5 seconds. Then slowly lower yourself down without holding onto the chair. Hold onto the chair or counter if you need to. When this exercise becomes less painful, try lowering on one leg only. Repeat 10 times. Do 3 sets of 10.
- **Balance and reach exercises**

Stand upright next to a chair with your injured leg farthest from the chair. This will provide you with support if you need it. Stand just on the foot of your injured leg. Try to raise the arch of this foot while keeping your toes on the floor.

1. Keep your foot in this position and reach forward in front of you with the hand farthest away from the chair, allowing your knee to bend. Repeat this 10 times while maintaining the arch height. This exercise can be made more difficult by reaching farther in front of you. Do 2 sets.
2. Stand in the same position as above. While maintaining your arch height, reach the hand farthest away from the chair across your body toward the chair. The farther you reach, the more challenging the exercise. Do 2 sets of 10.