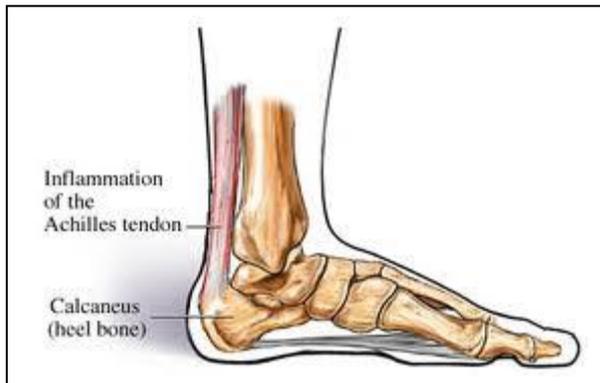


Achilles Tendonopathy/Tendonitis



Your Achilles tendon is the strongest tendon in the body found just behind and above your heel. It joins your heel bone (calcaneum) to your calf muscles and helps in bending your foot downwards at the ankle.

The Achilles tendon is very important in absorbing shock (especially when running) and enabling you to push up onto your toes eg. climbing hills/stairs.

What is Achilles tendonopathy?

Achilles tendonopathy is a condition that causes pain, swelling, stiffness and weakness of the Achilles tendon. The pain is often as a result of small but repetitive injuries (microtrauma) that occur at a rate faster than the body can heal them (ie. overuse injuries or tendonopathy).

What causes Achilles tendonopathy?

Achilles tendonopathy can start for no obvious reason however frequent causes can be:

- Overuse of the Achilles tendon for example runners, playing tennis and activities involving a lot of jumping. Also changes to your training programme such as frequency of training.
- Runners who alter their route/surface/duration.
- Wearing footwear that is not appropriate for the activity.
- Obesity.
- Poor flexibility, such as hamstring and calf tightness.

What are the symptoms of Achilles tendonopathy?

The main symptoms include pain and stiffness around the affected Achilles tendon. Pain and stiffness tend to develop gradually and are usually worse when you first wake up in the morning. Some people have pain during exercise but, in general, pain is worse after exercise. Pain may affect your daily activities.

When touching the Achilles tendon you may feel pain and swelling and/or thickening of the Achilles tendon.

What is the treatment for Achilles Tendonopathy?

Rest and avoiding activities that aggravate your symptoms is essential.

Use of **heat or ice packs** can help to reduce the symptoms, use for 10mins twice a day. Use whichever feels most effective to you.

Warmth: use a hot water bottle/wheat bag/ foot bath

Cold: a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel placed over the tendon

Your therapist may advise a **heel raise** to help reduce your symptoms.

Painkillers and anti inflammatory tablets/gels/creams may be helpful. Talk to your GP or pharmacist for further information and advice.

Try wearing **different footwear**, especially shoes with a shock absorbing sole and a slight heel may help.

Stretches to the Achilles tendon (see the exercise sheet attached).

Specific strengthening exercises as directed by your physio.

A referral to **orthotics** may be required.

What is the prognosis for Achilles tendonopathy?

This is difficult to say and will largely depend on how long you have had it for and whether you are able to avoid doing the things that are making it worse. It is likely to take some weeks, possibly 3-6 months to fully resolve.