

Lexington Clinic

Shoulder Center of Kentucky



USTAKY November 2021 Ask the Doc Article:
Achilles Tendinitis

Question:

What are the signs/symptoms of Achilles tendinitis and how is it treated?

Answer:

The Achilles tendon is a long and broad tendon connecting the calf muscles (the gastrocnemius and soleus) to the heel bone (calcaneus). The Achilles is necessary for plantarflexion (flexing the foot down), allowing for a powerful push off when running and

jumping. Every step requires the calf muscles to fire through the Achilles, and therefore, tendinitis is very common because of this constant use.

Achilles' tendinitis is simply inflammation in this region (calf muscle to heel bone) resulting in pain. The pain can be directly over the heel bone from rubbing in the area, at the attachment of the tendon to the calcaneus (heel bone), or at the junction of the muscle and tendon. Pain is usually worse with activity and improves with rest. Tendinitis is often related to overuse, increased activity or stress on the Achilles, or an imbalance of strength between the muscles behind and in front of the ankle. Tight calf muscles (usually the gastrocnemius) decrease the ability of the Achilles to relax, creating more tension and stress on the tendon fibers.

Treating Achilles Tendinitis usually does not involve surgery. Activity modification with decreasing running and jumping, aggressive stretching of the calf muscles (gastrocnemius and soleus), and anti-inflammatories are the first line of treatment. A heel lift can also decrease stress on the Achilles. A walking boot or night splint to hold the foot at 90 degrees can be helpful. Physical therapy for eccentric strengthening and ankle stabilization is often recommended. Avoid steroid injections in this region as they can cause Achilles ruptures. There is some evidence that patients may benefit from platelet-rich plasma injections. If all these conservative measures do not provide relief, there are surgical options available.

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Achilles Tendinitis Exercises/Stretches

Standing Straight Knee Calf Stretch



Stand with left foot back, leg straight, forward leg bent. Keeping left heel on floor and foot pointing straightforward, lean into wall until stretch is felt in calf. Hold 60 seconds.

Repeat 2 times per set. Do 1 set(s) per session.

Do 2 sessions per day.

Standing Bent Knee Calf Stretch



Stand with left foot back, both knees bent. Keeping left foot pointing straightforward, lean into wall until stretch is felt in lower calf.

Hold 60 seconds.

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Repeat 2 times per set. Do 1 set(s) per session.

Do 2 sessions per day.

Eccentric Heel Raises



Stand with only toes on step (heels off) and use support as needed for balance. Rise up on toes. Lifting non-injured leg, slowly lower injured heel for 3-5 seconds into stretch position (heels below toes/heels down).

15 reps per set, 3 sets per day, 7 days per week.

*If you are not injured, you can still use this exercise for a good stretch. Place toes on step with heels off and hold for 15-30 seconds, 3-4 repetitions.

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