

Achilles Tendon Injury

Information for patients

What is Achilles tendonopathy?

The Achilles tendon runs along the back of your lower leg and connects the two major calf muscles to the back of the heel bone. This major tendon is active during movements that require a push off the forefoot, such as running, jumping, cycling, or going up stairs.

The most common injuries related to the Achilles tendon include: Achilles tendonosis, Achilles tendon rupture, calf pulls and strains.

What is the treatment?

Stretching

It is very important to stretch your calf muscles at least twice a day as this will speed the healing process and reduce the pain more quickly (see exercises below).

Footwear

Wearing a shoe that supports your foot and fastens securely is an important part of your treatment plan. A trainer style shoe is ideal. Do not wear too flat or too high heels. It is essential that you minimise the time spent walking around barefoot.

Ice and massage

Ice will help to reduce local inflammation and massage will help with flexibility.

Orthotics and Insoles

You may be issued with an orthotic device depending on your foot type. These are used to support the foot and improve function. They should be transferred between all your shoes, even your slippers.

Exercises

The Achilles tendon responds well to exercise. It is important to continue with your treatments, even after the symptoms have subsided, to avoid reoccurrence of symptoms.

Wall stretches

These exercises need to be performed first with the knee **straight** and then with the knee **bent** in order to stretch both parts of your Achilles tendon. Twice a day do the following wall stretches:

- Face the wall, put both forearms on the wall at shoulder height, and put feet parallel, with toes slightly turned in and your weight on the outside of your feet.
- Your feet should be approximately 30 cm (12 inches) from the wall. With knees straight, lean towards the wall until a tightening is felt in the calf at the back leg. Gently hold for 20 seconds.
- Now repeat this exercise but with one leg in front of the other and with both knees bent.



Repeat the stretches 3 times.

Eccentric strengthening exercise

Warm up with gentle stationary cycling, walking, or marching in place for several minutes.

- Stand on the balls of your feet on the edge of a sturdy box or step, keeping your heels free.
- Maintain control at all times and slowly lift up as high as you can on both toes.
- Move your weight to one foot and slowly begin to lower yourself until your heels are just below the step.
- Shift your weight back to both feet and return to the start (top) position and repeat 10-15 times per leg.
- Add this to your general strengthening routine 2-3 times per week.
- Repeat with knee bent.



Perform three sets of 15 repetitions on each leg twice per day, 7 days per week for 12 weeks.

Stair stretches



- Holding the stair-rail for support, with legs slightly apart, position the feet so that both heels are off the end of the step.
- Lower the heels, keeping the knees straight, until a tightening is felt in the calf.
- Hold this position for 20–60 seconds and then raise the heels back to neutral.

Repeat 6 times, at least twice a day.

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