

Achilles tendinopathy

The Achilles tendon attaches to the calcaneous bone at the heel and divides into the calf muscles, allowing us to point our toes and is particularly important in walking or climbing stairs. Achilles Tendinopathy is a condition that causes pain, swelling, stiffness and weakness. It is thought to be caused by repeated stresses and tiny injuries to the Achilles tendon. These may occur for a number of reasons including overuse of the tendon, for example, in runners. Treatment includes rest, ice packs, pain killers, and exercises to help to stretch and strengthen the Achilles tendon and related muscle groups.

What can I do to help?

Rest: It is usually best to try to carry out your normal activities in small amounts, you mustn't overdo it. You need to take things slowly, pace your activities and avoid movements that make your pain worse.

Heat or Ice: Applying an ice pack to the back of your ankle may be helpful for reducing pain. A packet of frozen peas wrapped in a tea towel works well as an ice pack. Leave the peas in place for no more than 20 minutes at a time. This can be repeated several times a day.

Pain relief: Simple painkillers (like paracetamol) or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, NSAIDS, (like ibuprofen) are available over the counter and can be very effective but don't use them for more than 2 weeks without seeking medical advice. You should carefully read the Patient Information Leaflet that is provided with this medication.

It is advisable to consult your GP or pharmacist before taking additional pain relief if you are currently:

- taking any form of medication
- have any other pre-existing medical conditions
- pregnant

Exercise: It is important to keep exercising a painful tendon in a non-painful way. This will help stimulate the tendon to become stronger and less painful in time. Exercise will also maintain the strength of the muscles attaching to your Achilles.

Exercises to try:

Please try each one 10-15 times, 2-3 times a day. Some discomfort is normal as you may be moving muscles which are tight or stiff, however it is unhelpful if this pain continues for more than 30 minutes following your exercises. If this is the case, please reduce the distance you move or the duration of the hold. If your pain continues to worsen, please stop the exercises.

1. Ankle Pumps



Move foot up, pulling toes towards you and then down, pointing toes away.

2. Seated Calf Raise



Sit with your foot flat on the floor.
Slowly lift your heels off the floor. Return to starting position.

3. Standing Calf Raise



Holding onto the wall if necessary. Rise up onto your tiptoes (keeping your legs straight) before slowly (5 seconds) lowering down.

Repeat for 3 sets of 12 repetitions.