

Achilles Tendinitis

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What it is, Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment

What is Achilles Tendinitis?

Achilles tendinitis is a common condition that affects the Achilles tendon, the large band of tissue that connects the calf muscles to the heel bone. This tendon is crucial for walking, running, and jumping, making it susceptible to



overuse and injury. Achilles tendinitis typically results from repetitive stress to the tendon, leading to inflammation,

pain, and stiffness. If left untreated, it can progress to more severe complications, such as tendon tears or ruptures.

Achilles tendinitis is an overuse injury characterized by inflammation or irritation of the Achilles tendon. It is most

commonly seen in athletes, particularly runners, but can also affect individuals who engage in activities that place

excessive strain on the tendon. There are two main types of Achilles tendinitis:

1. **Non-insertional Achilles Tendinitis:** This occurs when fibers in the middle portion of the tendon degenerate and swell. It is more common in younger, active individuals.

2. **Insertional Achilles Tendinitis:** This affects the lower part of the tendon, where it attaches to the heel bone. It can occur at any age and is often associated with bone spurs.

Causes of Achilles Tendinitis

Achilles tendinitis is typically caused by repetitive stress or overuse of the tendon. Common contributing factors include:

Overuse or Sudden Increase in Activity : Rapidly increasing the intensity or duration of physical activities, such as running or jumping, can strain the tendon.

Tight or Weak Calf Muscles: Insufficient flexibility or strength in the calf muscles can place extra stress on the Achilles tendon.

Improper Footwear: Wearing shoes that lack proper support or cushioning can increase the risk of injury.

Age: The tendon naturally weakens with age, making it more prone to injury.

Biomechanical Issues: Flat arches, overpronation (excessive inward rolling of the foot), or abnormal walking patterns can contribute to tendon stress.



Training on Hard or Uneven Surfaces: Running or exercising on uneven terrain or hard surfaces can strain the tendon.

Symptoms of Achilles Tendinitis

The symptoms of Achilles tendinitis often develop gradually and may include:

Pain and Stiffness: Pain along the back of the leg or near the heel, especially in the morning or after physical activity.

Swelling: Mild swelling or thickening of the tendon.

Tenderness: Sensitivity when touching or pressing on the tendon.

Reduced strength in the affected leg, particularly when pushing off the foot.

Limited Range of Motion: Difficulty flexing the foot or pointing the toes.

In severe cases, the pain may become constant, and the tendon may feel stiff even at rest.



Treatment for Achilles Tendinitis

Early treatment is essential to prevent the condition from worsening. Treatment options vary depending on the severity of the injury and may include:

Rest and Activity Modification:

Avoid activities that exacerbate the pain, such as running or jumping.

Switch to low-impact exercises, such as swimming or cycling, to maintain fitness without straining the tendon.

Ice Therapy:

Apply ice packs to the affected area for 15–20 minutes several times a day to reduce pain and swelling.

Stretching and Strengthening Exercises:

Gentle stretching of the calf muscles can improve flexibility and reduce tension on the tendon.

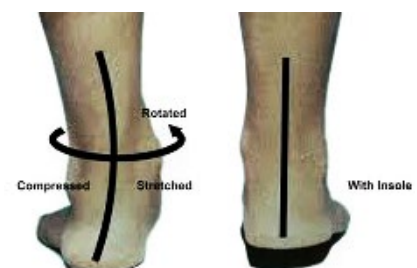
Strengthening exercises for the calf muscles can help support the tendon.

Medications: Over-the-counter nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, can help alleviate pain and inflammation.

Orthotics or Supportive Footwear:

Custom orthotics or shoes with proper arch support can correct biomechanical issues and reduce strain on the

tendon.



Physical Therapy:

-A physical therapist can design a personalized rehabilitation program to improve tendon strength and flexibility.

Corticosteroid Injections:

In some cases, corticosteroid injections may be used to reduce inflammation, but they are used cautiously due to the risk of tendon weakening.

Surgery:

Surgery is rarely needed but may be considered for chronic cases that do not respond to conservative treatment.

Procedures may involve removing damaged tissue or bone spurs.



Prevention Tips

To reduce the risk of Achilles tendinitis:

Gradually increase the intensity of physical activities.

Warm up properly before exercise and stretch afterward.

Wear appropriate footwear for your activity.

Strengthen and stretch the calf muscles regularly.

Avoid overtraining and allow adequate recovery time.

When to See a Doctor

If you experience persistent pain, swelling, or difficulty walking, consult a healthcare professional. Early diagnosis and treatment can prevent complications and promote a faster recovery.

By understanding the causes, symptoms, and treatment options for Achilles tendinitis, individuals can take proactive steps to protect their tendon health and maintain an active lifestyle.