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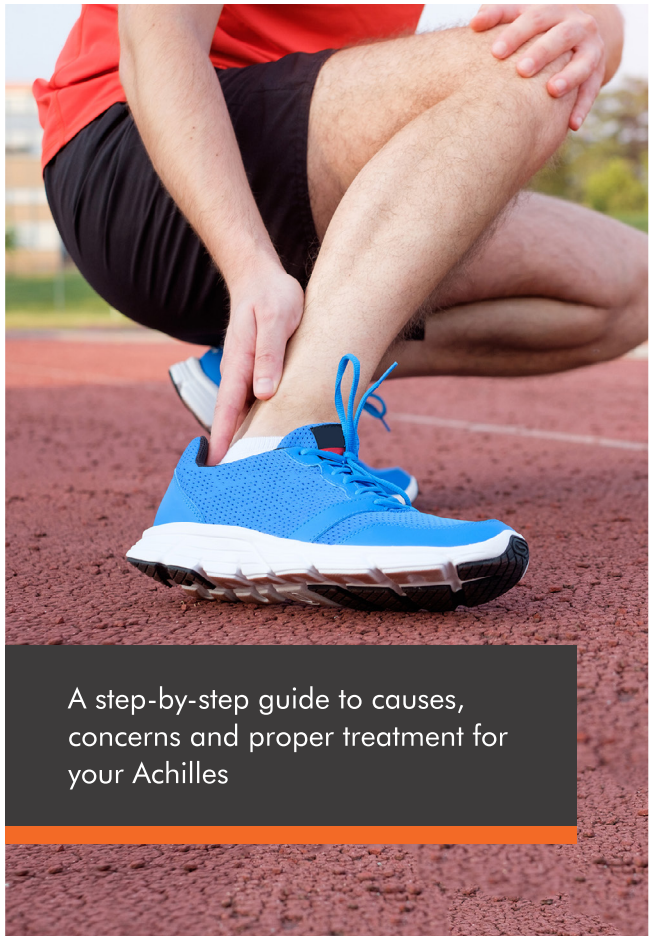
ACHILLES TENDINOPATHY

Foot pain at the back of your heel?



A step-by-step guide to causes, concerns and proper treatment for your Achilles

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Achilles Tendinopathy

Stretching Tips

- Stretch until a tightness or resistance is felt, then hold.
- Do not go to the point of pain. Stretching should not be painful.
- Stretching should be done slowly and with control.
- Repeat stretches 3 times per leg by taking the stretch a little further and holding.
- Stretches should be held for a minimum 45 seconds or until resistance is no longer felt.
- Stretches must be done at least 2 times a day every day to see results.

See inside panel for stretching exercises.

WHAT IS ACHILLES TENDINOPATHY?

The Achilles tendon is the largest tendon in the body, and is responsible for propelling your entire bodyweight forward and up during activity. It can take forces up to 12 times a person's bodyweight during a sprint! This tendon does not have a rich blood supply, so it is more susceptible to injury, causing irritation, inflammation and leading to pain and swelling. In severe cases, this can result in complete rupture of the tendon.

SYMPTOMS

- Pain over the back of the heel
- Significant pain after periods of inactivity
- Pain during activities involving pushing off or jumping
- Sensation of "fullness" in the lower leg, or may develop a hard nodule of tissue

CAUSES

Achilles tendinopathy most commonly results from a series of stresses causing a chronic condition over time, but can result from a single incident. Some causes include:

- **Foot Mechanics:** Flat, pronated feet can stretch the Achilles tendon in a "bow and arrow" type manner, while high arched and rigid feet naturally posses a tight Achilles tendon.
- **Muscular Factors:** Tight lower leg muscles pull more on the Achilles tendon.
- **Activities:** Changes or increases in athletic training, participating in activities involving a negative heel strike (walking or running uphill, hiking, soccer), sudden starting and stopping, and jumping can all contribute to this condition.
- **Footwear:** Continuous use of high heels can contribute to a tight Achilles tendon.
- **Individual:** Weight gain and increasing age also place you at a greater risk.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

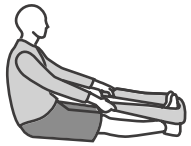
- **Stretching** before and after exercise, or even in the morning, maintains flexibility of the tendons and adjoining muscles.
- **Arch supports or custom orthotics** aid in correction of improper foot mechanics, such as overpronation, and helps to avoid excessive strain on the Achilles tendon.
- **Proper footwear** with a strong base, a deep heel counter, and additional cushioning features help support the arch, cushion impact and help accelerate healing.
- **Rest** an appropriate amount of time between bouts of activity, and cross-training to provide variety to the muscles and tendons.

REHABILITATIVE MEASURES

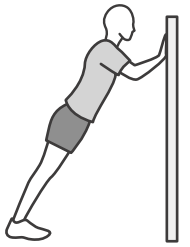
- **Adequate rest** and icing of the area for 15-20 minutes, allowing at least 45 minutes for the area to warm before icing again (most effective up to 48 hours following injury).
- **Achilles tendon night splints** act to hold the foot in a flexed position overnight so that the tendon is fully stretched and can heal in an uncompromised position.

- **Heel lifts** in shoes can help shorten the length of the tendon and ease the pain, but it is important to eventually get the tendon back to full length and range of motion.
- **Anti-inflammatory drugs** can help ease the pain and reduce swelling, including topical treatments such as Kinesys Analgesic Balm.
- **Physiotherapy** and massage therapy can help with recovery.

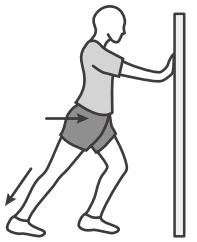
STRETCHING EXERCISES



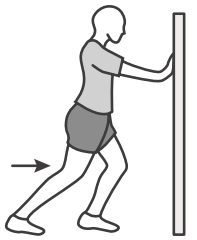
Sit on the floor with both legs extended in front of you. Pull toes back towards you, or use a strap to pull toes back until a stretch is felt in the calf (knees slightly bent). Hold this position for 45 seconds to 1 minute. This stretch can also be done one leg at a time.



Stand in front of a wall so that both feet are hip width apart, and toes are pointing towards the wall. Stand far back enough so that as you lean into your arms while keeping both legs straight, a stretch is felt in both calves. Hold for 45 seconds to 1 minute.



Lean against a wall or chair. Keep your upper body vertical and your feet pointed forward with one staggered in front of the other. Keep your back knee straight, and hold this stretch for 45 seconds to 1 minute. Repeat for both legs. Follow this stretch with stretch 4, in order to reach both the upper and lower calf muscles.



In the same position as the previous stretch, bring your back leg closer in to you, and bend the knee so a stretch is felt in the lower part of the calf and the Achilles tendon. Repeat for both legs and hold for 45 seconds to 1 minute.

Always consult with a physiotherapist before starting any therapeutic strengthening and stretching exercise program.