

Pain in the Achilles tendon and heel is a common problem that affects athletes and the general public alike. The Achilles tendon is the largest tendon in the body and it attaches the main muscles of the calf (gastrocnemius and soleus) to the heel bone.

The calf muscles and Achilles tendon are responsible for absorbing a considerable amount of shock in everyday walking and much more during running and jumping activities.

For a soft tissue, it has very poor blood supply which decreases further after the age of 25 years, which is one of the reasons why it can take so long to heal when injured.



Common Causes

- Sudden increase in activity intensity or volume
- Insufficient recovery time between training
- Change in surface (either at home, work or sport)
- Inappropriate or worn out footwear
- Tightness of the calf muscle
- Reduced motion of the ankle
- Abnormal foot biomechanics, increased pronation
- Overweight / obesity
- Certain diseases
- Hormones (females)

How is it treated?

Achilles tendonitis responds well if appropriate treatment is initiated early. If symptoms are ignored, then the condition will become chronic and the treatment more prolonged and invasive. Calcification, tearing and rupture may occur.

- Reduce pain and inflammation (RICE)
- Short term use of anti-inflammatory medication
- Reduce the load on the tendon with heel raises, orthotics, and appropriate footwear
- Improve strength
- Improve function (dry needling, mobilization)
- Appropriate stretching exercises
- Shockwave Therapy (ECSWT)

Common Symptoms

- Pain and stiffness in the morning
- Point tenderness
- Swelling and thickening of the tendon
- Pain at the start of exercises and after
- Limping or guarded gait



Neutral

Pronation

Note: increased strain through Achilles tendon due to bowing

Wearing Orthotics

Orthotics should be worn for 80% of the time you are on your feet. For most people this means work (or school) and during exercise. Most people require two or more pairs of orthotics to suit their different shoes.

For further information on your foot health or to discuss treatment options with a podiatrist, please contact your local my FootDr podiatry centre.