

Achilles Tendinopathy

Achilles tendinopathy is an injury to the band of tissue (tendon) that runs down the back of your lower leg to your heel. You may get pain, stiffness and sometimes swelling that makes it hard for you to move freely.



Symptoms:

Achilles tendinopathy can cause several symptoms, including:

- increasing pain, usually at the back of your leg or heel
- stiffness in the tendon
- swelling at the back of your ankle
- tenderness when you touch the tendon
- a grating noise or creaking feeling (crepitus) when you move your ankle

The pain of Achilles tendinopathy can come and go. It may be worse first thing in the morning or after you've done some exercise or activity.

Diagnosis:

Achilles tendinopathy can usually be diagnosed from your symptoms. Your doctor or physiotherapist will advise on further investigation if deemed necessary.

Causes:

Sports and other activities can put a lot of stress on your Achilles tendon. You may be more likely to damage your tendon if you're a runner or cyclist or do anything that involves jumping, such as dancing or tennis. You may also increase your risk of damage if you:

- use of badly designed equipment, including wearing the wrong footwear
- sudden increase in your exercise level
- training on hard, slippery or slanting surfaces
- exercise in extreme weather conditions, especially the cold
- have a high-arched or low-arched foot — this can put more strain on your Achilles tendon.

Treatment:

- **Rest:** Rest will help prevent further injury and allows the healing process to begin. For the first few days, reduce the amount of walking you do. Gently move your ankle regularly to avoid stiffness. Avoid forceful and strenuous activity like running and jumping until you can walk without any pain. Always try to walk normally i.e. your heel strikes the floor first, rock forward on your foot and then push off with your toes.

- **Ice:** Apply cold packs wrapped in a towel for up to 15-20 minutes 2-3 times a day.

- **Compression:** The painful area can be compressed with a bandage to reduce swelling and limit movement which can cause further damage.

- **Elevation:** keep your leg raised and supported on a pillow as much as possible to help reduce any swelling.

If you think you've damaged your Achilles tendon, it's important to seek medical advice straight away from a physiotherapist or musculoskeletal (MSK) specialist. Achilles tendinopathy gets harder to treat the longer you leave it untreated. Physiotherapy can help to strengthen and stretch your Achilles tendon.

Your doctor or physiotherapist will also be able to consider further referral for orthopaedic review if deemed necessary.

Exercise considerations:

- Do all the exercises within pain free limits, stretch pain is common with exercises and that should ease off within 30 minutes-1 hour after having done the exercises
- Post exercise soreness is quite common and could be felt up to 48 hours after having done the exercise regime. This should get better as you continue with the regime over time
- If any exercise worsens your symptoms, stop that exercise and seek advice from your physiotherapist.