

# Achilles Tendon Pain



This information leaflet has been produced by Senior Physiotherapists working at Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

The Achilles tendon is the large tendon at the back of the ankle. It connects the large calf muscles to the heel bone. Just like joints, the Achilles tendon is also subject to wear and tear or degeneration and this can result in Achilles Tendinopathy.

## Symptoms

These may include:

- Pain and stiffness up the back of the ankle, especially in the morning. The symptoms normally start gradually.
- Pain whilst running or walking, especially up hill or on stairs. It may subside with rest.
- The tendon may feel hot and swollen and may feel lumpy to touch.

## Causes

Anything that places increased stress on the Achilles tendon may produce symptoms. There are a number of possible causes, which include the following:

- Poor ankle / foot mechanics; for example flat footedness.
- Poor conditioning; weakness and / or tightness of the calf muscles.
- Overuse, such as repetitive uphill running.

## Management

**Rest the tendon** Reduce the amount of running/walking you do.

**Shoe wear** A heel lift shoe insert can be worn (in both shoes) to reduce the stretch on the tendon. Make sure the back of your shoe does not rub on the painful area.

**Apply ice to the area** for 10-15 minutes to help reduce any inflammation and soreness. A bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel is ideal.

**Medications** can be taken to help ease the pain and inflammation. Ask your GP or pharmacist for advice.

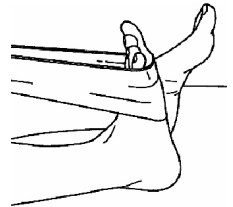
**Stretching** the tendon can help reduce pain. The following exercises may help to relieve symptoms.

## Exercises

The following exercises should not increase your pain. Perform each exercise gently and slowly, only moving as far as feels comfortable. If you have used ice, allow 30 minutes before exercising. Complete two to three times per day:

1. Sit with one leg out in front of you. Put a towel around your foot. Gently pull the towel and feel the stretch in your calf. Hold for 30 seconds.

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2. Stand in a walking position with the leg to be stretched behind you. Hold onto a support. Bend the leg to be stretched and let the weight of your body stretch your calf without lifting the heel off the floor. Hold for 30 seconds.

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3. Stand in a walking position with the leg to be stretched behind you and the other leg bent in front of you. Hold onto a support. Lean your body forwards and down until you feel the stretching in the calf of the straight leg. Hold for 30 seconds.

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And finally...

If your symptoms persist despite following the above advice, you may require some specialist advice and treatment from a physiotherapist.

If you have any queries regarding this information or the exercises provided, please contact the

**Physiotherapy department: Tel - 01342 414004.**

Please ask if you would like this leaflet  
in larger print or an alternative format.

Physiotherapy

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