

ACHILLES TENDINITIS

◆ What is it?

Achilles tendinitis is characterized by inflammation and pain at the Achilles tendon (back of the ankle). This tendon, sometimes called the heel cord, is the tendon attachment of the calf muscles from the leg and knee to the heel. The Achilles tendon is necessary to stand on your toes and for the pushing-off phase of walking, running, or jumping.

◆ Signs and Symptoms of this Condition

- Pain, tenderness, swelling, and sometimes crepitus (clicking or crackling sound) over the Achilles tendon
- Pain reproduced with ankle motion, walking, running, jumping, and other activities requiring pushing off with your foot
- Focal pain to press on the Achilles tendon

Achilles Tendon



◆ Causes

This condition is most commonly caused by overuse, although it can be caused by shoes rubbing the back of the heel and Achilles tendon. The following may be contributing factors:

- Excessive running (too far, too frequently without sufficient rest periods between bouts of running, sudden increases in running mileage/duration/frequency)
- Running in running shoes that are worn-out (replace running shoes every 500 miles)
- Running on hills
- Having tight calf muscles

◆ What Can I do to Prevent Achilles Tendinitis?

- Train properly (slowly progress running mileage, avoid running every day to ensure adequate recovery, avoid running hills and on side sloped / banked surfaces)
- Change running shoes out every 500 miles (every 6-9 months for many average runners)
- Warm-up and stretch well before running (calf, hamstrings, quadriceps)

◆ Prognosis

Acute Achilles tendinitis will normally resolve in 6-8 weeks given sufficient rest from running and walking, daily ice treatment, and calf stretching. It will not improve by continuing to run or work through the pain while continuing to run. Chronic Achilles tendinitis (cases in which athletes continue to run through the pain with symptoms lasting longer than 6-8 weeks and often developing a knot or nodule in the tendon) can take 6-9 months or longer to heal. Anti-inflammatory medication can also help in resolving this condition.

◆ Treatment

- Rest – NO running, stair machine or ski machine for exercise (Biking or swimming are good alternate forms of aerobic fitness training)
- Ice massage over the Achilles tendon 10 minutes 1-2 times per day. (Ice massage is performed by filling paper or foam cups with water and freezing them. Take the frozen cup and tear off the outer edge of the cup near the lip to expose the ice. Hold the cup with one hand and place the ice portion so that it is in contact with the injured/painful area and rub in circles over the painful area). **See Below**
- Anti-inflammatory medication (aspirin, ibuprofen, etc) may be helpful in reducing both pain and inflammation
- Calf stretching (with knee bent and knee straight, hold each stretch 30 seconds, repeat 2-3 repetitions, 2 times per day) **See Below**
- Change to a new pair of running shoes if indicated
- SLOWLY progress back into jogging by alternating between walking and jogging every other day with a gradual increase in jogging distance and decrease in walking distance until performing straight jogging
- Symptoms can return if you resume running, jumping, or prolonged walking too early

