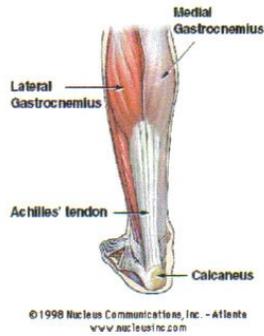


Achilles Tendonitis



The Achilles tendon is the strongest tendon in the body. The Achilles tendon connects the calf muscle to the heel bone. The tendon was named after the Greek warrior who could only be mortally wounded in his heel. This tendon supports your body's weight during exercise and everyday activities such as walking and stair climbing. When this tendon becomes irritated or inflamed, you may experience a sharp, constant pain just above your heel.

Causes of Achilles Tendonitis

- Tight calf muscles due to poor stretching or a too rapid increase in the frequency or intensity of athletic activity typically cause Achilles tendonitis.
- Flat feet or over-pronation during walking or running
- Shoes that do not stabilize your feet
- Leg length discrepancy
- Direct trauma or injury to the tendon
- Heel bone deformity

Symptoms

- Characterized by a sharp or burning pain approximately 2" above the heel bone of the foot. The pain can be accompanied by mild to moderate swelling
- In cases where the condition has existed long-term, additional symptoms may include: thickening of the tendon compared to the other leg, a crackling sound with movement of the ankle, or tiny bumps along the tendon caused by scar tissue that has formed around the tendon

Treatment

- Temporarily stop the activity that caused the pain (running, excessive walking, etc)
- Ice and/or massage the painful area. Apply the ice about three times per day for 20 minutes to help reduce pain and inflammation of the tendon.
- Gently stretch your calf muscle
- A heel lift in your shoes may be helpful in some cases to reduce the pull on the tendon and promote healing.

Prevention

- Consistently stretch your calf muscle before exercising or walking
- Ease back into exercise slowly
- Proper footwear is key especially during the spring and summer months.
- Wear shoes that stabilize your feet during motion. A supportive shoe has the following characteristics:
 - A firm heel counter
 - A wide enough toe box to accommodate toes without pinching
 - A semi-rigid or rigid shank
 - A removable inner sole
 - A heel measuring between $\frac{3}{4}$ "- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

If your heel pain persists consult with a podiatrist. Chronic Achilles tendonitis may require physical therapy, cast immobilization, or surgery in extreme cases.