Achilles Tendinopathy

This leaflet provides information on what achilles tendinopathy is and how you can manage it.

**What is the Achilles tendon?**

The Achilles tendon is found just behind and above your heel. It joins your heel bone (calcaneum) to your calf muscles. The function of the Achilles tendon is to help you go up on your tip toes.

**What is Achilles tendinopathy?**

Achilles tendinopathy occurs when a tendon is unable to adapt to the strain being placed on it. This leads to repeated small amounts of damage within the tendon fibres & results in the tendon trying to heal itself in response to the strain.

**What causes Achilles tendinopathy?**

- Sudden increase in the amount or intensity of running
- Repetitive activity
- Tight and/or weak calf muscles
- Wrong or old running shoes
- Stiff joints in the foot

**Symptoms – what you notice?**

- Pain above the back of the heel, as well as stiffness (especially in the morning)
- Pain after running & while running, which worsens a few hours after the run
- As the pain progresses you find you are unable to run as far before it comes on, and the pain may stick around for an hour or two after exercise.
- Tight and stiff calves
- Usually there will be localised swelling at the painful site, forming a bump.

**How is Achilles tendinopathy managed?**

**Reduce the tendons use** – Reduce the amount of walking and running that you do

**Medications** – Can be taken to help ease the pain and inflammation – Speak to your GP or Pharmacist

**Ice** – Ice the painful site for a maximum of 20 minutes following activity
Exercises for the early stages (Isometric exercise)

- Push your foot against a rolled up towel or belt.
- Hold for 20-30 seconds, repeat 3 times, twice per day.
- Progress the time you hold as able e.g build up to 45 sec x 5

Exercises for the later stages

(Do not progress onto this exercise if your pain exceeds a 4/10)
0 being no pain at all 10 being the worst pain imaginable.

- Stand as you would normally, with your hands lightly resting on a counter or chair in front of you.
- Slowly raise your heels off the floor while keeping your knees straight
- Hold for 3 seconds, then very slowly lower your heel down on the effected side
- Raise both heels off the floor & repeat
- Complete 3 sets of 8 repetitions once per day and increase the number of repetitions you do as able

Final stage of recovery

- Continue swimming and cycling as much as the pain will allow.
- Restart running, beginning slowly on grass for 5-10 minutes, and build up your normal training over the next 2-3 months.

Summary

- For most people achilles tendinopathy can take from 3-6 months to settle down.
- It is important to modify activity until the symptoms settle down while carrying out the exercises
- If there is no improvement in symptoms after following the above advice for 3 months seek help from a Physiotherapist/GP

Useful websites:

- [www.cks.nhs.uk/achilles_tendinopathy](http://www.cks.nhs.uk/achilles_tendinopathy)
- [www.nhs.uk/conditions/Tendonitis/Pages/Introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Tendonitis/Pages/Introduction.aspx)

Note: This information is intended as general information only.