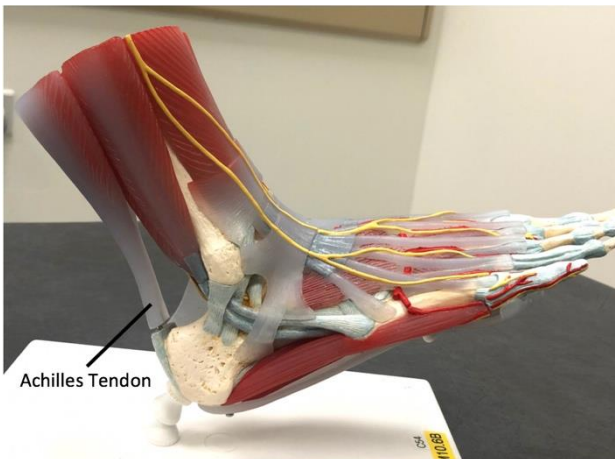


ACHILLES TENDINOPATHY

Achilles tendinopathy can present as pain along the tendon slightly above the heel or behind the heel bone.

What is the Achilles tendon?

Achilles tendon is the thickest and strongest tendon in the human body. It is a tendon that connects the calf muscles to the heel bone (calcaneus).



BACKGROUND

Achilles tendon injury can result in pain, swelling and warmth.

The onset can also be gradual and may not be related to an acute injury. The pain can primarily be caused by repeated stress to the tendon or sudden increase in load from increased physical activities.

CAN PHYSIOTHERAPY HELP?

Yes! There is evidence to suggest that therapeutic exercise can help to relieve pain and improve physical function for people with Achilles tendinopathy. Doing exercises may also improve muscle strength and endurance.

Your physiotherapist will devise a treatment plan based on your personal needs and goals.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Achilles tendon pain can occur during or after certain activities. The pain can vary in different individuals.

You may experience one or more of the following:

- Pain or tender to the touch over the Achilles tendon or the back of the heel.
- Swelling over the Achilles tendon.
- Feeling stiff around your heel or calves when you first move after a period of sitting, lying or standing.
- Pain increases with increased intensity of activities such as walking or running.

AGGRAVATING ACTIVITIES

You may experience pain or more pain when you do some of the following activities:

- Running
- Jumping/hopping
- Climbing up/downstairs
- Going up/down slopes

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PHYSIOTHERAPY MANAGEMENT & TREATMENT

Rehabilitation for Achilles tendinopathy may require time. However, the overall outlook is positive. Many individuals will be able to return to the activity or sports that they enjoy.

Physiotherapists can help by:

- Educating you on factors that may contribute to your pain
- Providing suggestions to modify your activities
- Prescribing an individualised exercise programme

Here is an exercise which you can get started on:

	<p>In a seated position, raise your heel up and down in a slow controlled manner.</p>	<p>You can stop if your muscles get tired.</p>
 	<p>If this is your 1st time doing this exercise, you should start from low number of repetition first (e.g. 5 times), ensuring that it does not cause more pain or discomfort.</p> <p>You can consult your physiotherapist for more ways to help you too.</p>	<p>It is normal to experience some muscle soreness after exercising.</p> <p>STOP exercising if you feel severe pain. Seek advice from your physiotherapist if your pain persists or worsens.</p>

TIPS TO HELP YOURSELF

Relative rest

- Temporarily reduce your exercise intensity in the initial phase of your pain.
- Consider other exercises to maintain your body fitness such as stationary biking, water running and swimming.

Pain management

- Try icing and elevating the leg if pain and swelling are present.
- Wear supportive and comfortable footwear.
- Consider using orthotic in-shoe heel lifts if needed.
- If you experience morning stiffness, gently move your ankle up/down and side to side prior to getting out of bed.
- Take pain medication as prescribed by your doctor if the pain is affecting your daily lifestyle.

Gradual movement/loading

- Avoid sudden increase in activity that you have not done before or have not done for a prolonged period.
- If you are not used to exercising, start with low impact activities such as walking or swimming.
- Make sure to warm up and cool down before and after exercising.

Be patient!

Tendons are generally slower to heal as compared to muscles. You may experience some flare ups if you increase your activities too quickly.

- Progress your activity in a **graduated** fashion

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