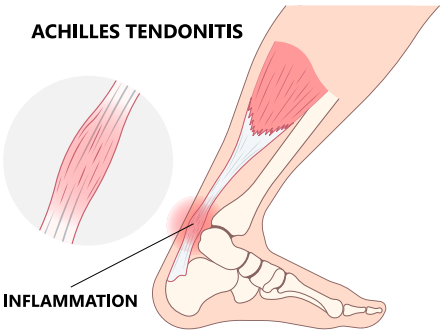
PATIENT HANDOUT 2. Please feel free to copy and distribute this page.

Achilles Tendonitis

What is Achilles tendonitis?

The Achilles tendon is found at the back of your lower leg and connects the calf muscles to your heel bone. When the tendon is overused, degeneration of the Achilles tendon can occur.



What are the symptoms?

- You will have pain along the tendon which becomes worse with more activity.
- The tendon may thicken, and you may notice swelling that increases with activity or as the day progresses.
- When you wear shoes, you may have pain at the back of your heel.

How is Achilles tendonitis treated?

It may take months for all your symptoms to be gone. Treatments to begin with include:

- Decrease or stop high-impact activities (e.g., running), and try non-impact activities (e.g., biking or swimming). Reduce activities that cause increased pain.
- Ice the area of most pain for less than 20 minutes each time. Remove the ice if the area becomes numb.
- Try calf stretches that can be done at home. Eccentric strengthening exercises can be done at home after you have learned the correct technique with a physiotherapist, as incorrect form can cause damage to the tendon.
- Anti-inflammatory medications (e.g., ibuprofen) are unlikely to help with the pain, and they may have side effects. Talk to your primary care clinician before using these medications.
- Cortisone injections are not recommended and can cause the tendon to tear. Platelet-rich plasma injections also lack evidence to recommend their use.

Exercise Resources

Calf Stretch

Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

YouTube Video

Achilles Tendonitis Eccentric Exercise

Indy Podiatry

YouTube Video

Achilles Tendon: Exercises

Government of Alberta

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Source: OrthoInfo, American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. *Achilles tendinitis*. 2022. https://www.orthoinfo.org/en/diseases–conditions/achilles-tendinitis/

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