

Achilles Tendonitis

Achilles tendonitis is a painful inflammation of the Achilles tendon caused by repetitive micro trauma. This can be the result of continuous overpronation, resulting in the Achilles tendon being “rubbed” back and forth over its attachment on the heel. A tight Achilles tendon is a main contributor to direct strain on it’s attachment at the heel bone. This can also encourage overpronation and plantar fasciitis.

Wearing shoes with excessively soft heels, overtraining, and running up hills can affect a greater strain on the Achilles tendon. This condition is also common in women who wear high heels but switch to low-heeled sports shoes for training.

There are four stages (Grades) of Achilles Tendonitis:

Grade 1 Mild and localized pain after activity. Rest and anti-inflammatory medication are indicated along with a decrease in activity. A slight heel raise will help to reduce the tension on the tendon.

Grade 2 Increased pain, swelling and stiffness. A small nodule may be present in the tendon itself. Limit activities even more or cease it altogether. Low-impact activities like swimming and bicycling are recommended.

Grade 3 Severe pain and motion limitation. Pain during and after activity. At this point, a non-weightbearing cast or walking boot is recommended. Rest for a prescribed period of time is essential for healing to occur.

Grade 4 Partial tear or complete rupture of the tendon. Surgical repair may be necessary.

At each stage, reducing the tension on the Achilles tendon itself is essential. Custom-made foot orthotics that firmly cup the heel and support the overpronating foot will alleviate much of this strain. The patient should wear well fitting shoes with a moderate heel height. A small heel raise may be added to the orthoses. The patient needs to adjust their activity level and the fashion requirements of their footwear as well.

Once fully healed, the patient needs to practice a daily stretching routine targeting both the Gastrocnemius and Soleus muscles to prevent a re-occurrence of these symptoms.

Achilles Tendonitis has similar symptoms to Retro-Calcaneal Bursitis. The definitive diagnosis will need to be determined by your Health Care Practitioner. Likelihood of reoccurrence is relatively high.