

Anatomy

A tendon is a structure that attaches muscle to bone. The Achilles tendon attaches your calf muscle (Gastrocnemius and Soleus) onto your heel bone (Calcaneus). Your calf muscle generates force required for walking and running and transmits this force through the Achilles tendon to lift your heel off the ground, bringing your foot up onto its toes.

Description

Achilles Tendonopathy is the term used to describe pain in the Achilles tendon associated with degenerative changes or breakdown of the tendon. Degenerative change is caused by repetitive strain of the tendon.

There is an area of the tendon 2-6cm above the heel bone that has poor blood supply, making the tendon more prone to injury and slower to heal. This blood supply becomes even worse with age.

Signs and Symptoms

- Pain during or after walking, running, jumping activities
- Morning stiffness
- Weak and/ or tight calf muscles
- Tenderness on palpation of the Achilles tendon
- Formation of palpable nodule or a thickening of the tendon

Causes

A number of factors can contribute to this condition and those below are the most common:

- Overuse or repetitive strain
- Chronic Achilles tendonitis: acute inflammation left untreated or poorly managed
- Decreased blood supply
- Biomechanical factors such as excessive pronation for example



Treatment

Physiotherapy treatment will assist in the most rapid and complete recovery and can include (but is not limited to):

- Rest from aggravating activities
- Soft tissue massage and stretches
- Specific calf strength exercises prescribed to both stimulate/repair of the Achilles tendon and increase strength of the muscle
- Graduated return to sport program
- Heel lifts or Orthotics
- Biomechanical or running technique correction

It is essential to complete your rehabilitation properly. An Achilles tendonopathy can gradually worsen, leading to an increase in the tendon's susceptibility to a complete rupture. Such a rupture requires surgical intervention and a lengthy period of rehabilitation.

Please feel free to discuss any problems or queries with your physiotherapist or get up to date treatment options by subscribing online at www.rehabonthenet.com.