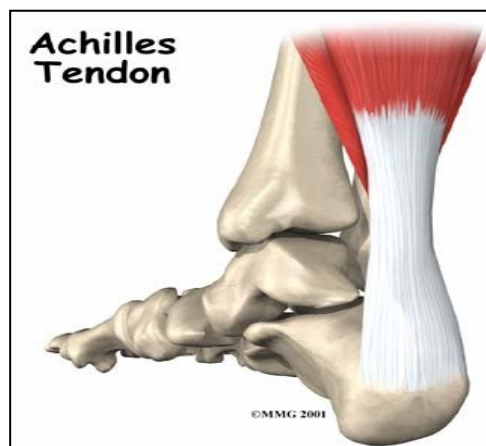


## **Achilles Tendon Pain Information for Patients**

### **The Achilles Tendon**

The Achilles tendon is the large tendon at the back of the ankle. It connects the large calf muscles to the heel bone. Just like joints, the Achilles tendon is also subject to 'wear and tear' or 'degeneration' and this can result in Achilles Tendinopathy.



### **What are the symptoms of Achilles Tendinopathy?**

People usually complain of pain and stiffness behind the ankle along the Achilles tendon, especially in the morning. The symptoms normally start gradually. Pain typically occurs whilst running or walking, especially up hill or on stairs, and subsides with rest. The tendon may feel hot and swollen, and may feel lumpy to touch.

### **What causes Achilles Tendinopathy?**

Anything that places increased stress on the Achilles tendon will cause it to become symptomatic. There are a number of causes, which include the following:

- Poor ankle/foot mechanics; flat footedness.
- Poor conditioning; weakness and/or tightness of the calf muscles.
- Overuse injury, such as repetitive uphill running.

## What can you do to help relieve symptoms?

**Rest the tendon** Reduce the amount of running/walking you do.

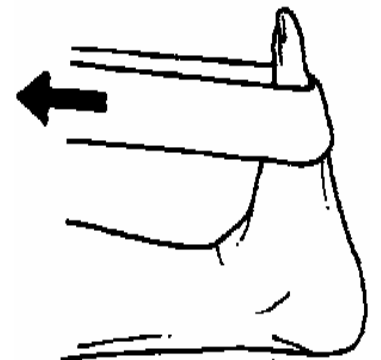
**Shoe wear** A small heel will reduce the stretch on the tendon.  
Gentleman; a heel lift shoe insert can be worn (in both shoes).  
Make sure the back of your shoe does not rub on the painful area.

**Apply ice to the area** for 10-15 minutes to help reduce any inflammation and soreness.  
A bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel is ideal.  
CAUTION - direct contact of ice on the skin can cause burns.

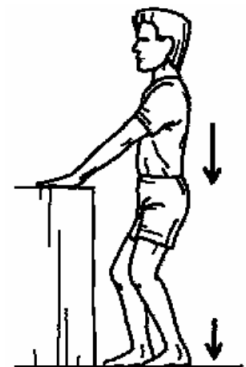
**Medications** can be taken to help ease the pain and inflammation. Ask your GP or local pharmacist for advice.

**Stretching** the tendon can help reduce pain, especially when performed before standing after rest.

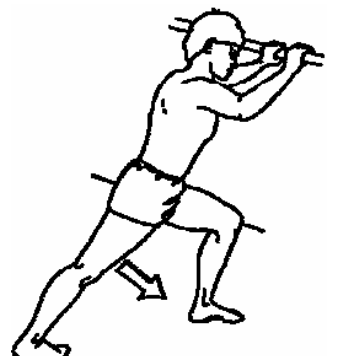
Before getting up out of bed or from a chair.  
Stretch the foot upwards, using a towel to help.  
Hold for 20 seconds, 5 times  
Repeat 3-4 times a day



Place the affected foot behind and gently bend your knees  
– feel the stretch in the back of the calf.  
Hold for 20 seconds, 5 times  
Repeat 3-4 times a day



Place the affected foot behind.  
Keeping the back leg straight, bend the front knee gently  
lunging forwards – feel the stretch in the back of the calf.  
Hold for 20 seconds 5 times  
Repeat 3-4 times a day



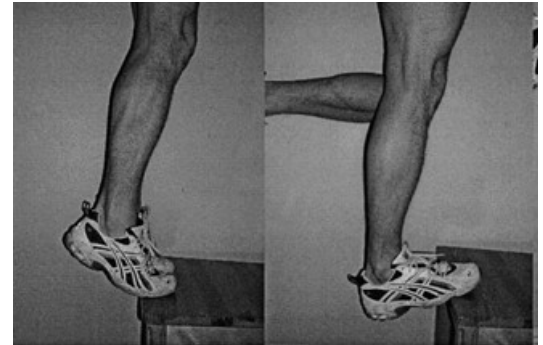
**Eccentric Strengthening.** The following strict exercise regime is thought to be the most effective treatment; it can be up to 95% effective in 3 months. If you would score your pain 5/10 or less - then it is appropriate to introduce these exercises.

To be effective the following exercises must be performed twice a day for 12 weeks.

### **Exercise 1 (A) - with knees straight**

**A**

- Stand with heels over the edge of a step.
- Hold onto the doorway for balance.
- Rise up onto the toes of the **UNAFFECTED** leg only.
- Transfer your weight onto the toes of the affected leg only.
- Slowly lower the heel of the **AFFECTED** leg below the level of the step (A).
- Transfer your weight and repeat this 15 times (1 set).
- Perform 3 sets with a small rest in between, daily.
- Take care not to lose your balance.



### **Exercise 2 (B) - with knee bent**

**B**

- As above but performing with the knees kept slightly bent.



**NB:** You may find the exercises painful especially for the first few weeks; this is to be expected.

Stop if the pain becomes severe. If you are struggling with these exercises, please seek guidance from a qualified physiotherapist.

Once these exercises become pain free, perform the exercises with weights, You can use hand weights or add some weight to a rucksack to wear whilst doing the exercises. Build it up gradually.'

### **Summary**

Achilles Tendinopathy pain can take some months to settle down.

If your symptoms do not settle within 3 months of following the above steps, you may benefit from a review with a physiotherapist or podiatrist.