

Sever's Disease

What is Sever's Disease?

While the word "disease" may sound scary, this condition is actually a fairly common heel injury among children and adolescents. This type of bone injury, also called "calcaneal apophysitis," occurs with the growth plate in the heel. The feet are one of the first parts of your body to grow to full size but what often happens is the bones in your feet grow faster than the muscles and tendons. When this happens, the tendons and muscles can become really tight. This makes the heel less flexible and puts pressure on the growth plate.

The Achilles tendon, one of the strongest in your body, is attached to the growth plate in the heel. Repeated stress and pressure on this tight tendon can damage the growth plate, causing pain and swelling. This injury is what we call Sever's disease.

What Are the Symptoms of Sever's Disease?

If you are concerned that your child may have this type of injury, there are a few common signs and symptoms to look for. With Sever's disease, Dr. Danciger will look for:

- Pain and tenderness in one or both heels
- Pain at the back, sides and bottom of one or both heels
- Pain when squeezing the sides of the heel
- Difficulty walking and pain after running
- Pain or stiffness in the feet in the morning
- Redness and swelling in one or both heels

What Causes Sever's Disease? Is My Child at Risk?

Sever's disease is a common heel injury in kids who are growing and physically active. During the 2 year growth spurt in early puberty is often when most children would be at a higher risk for this injury. The growth plate and bones usually fuse and mature by the age of 15 so it is rare that an older teenager would sustain this injury.

There are several common causes for what may lead to the development of Sever's disease. Your child may be at risk if they are heavily involved in sports that involve a lot of running and jumping, especially on hard and unforgiving surfaces. Gymnastics, basketball, track and soccer would be examples of sports that can cause stress to this area of the foot. Being in situations where a child is standing for long periods of time could also cause this injury. Some further causes Dr. Danciger sees in his younger patients include:

- Poor fitting footwear
- Having a pronated foot that rolls inward and adds extra stress to the foot
- Having flat or high arches that can cause shortening and tightness of the Achilles tendon
- Obesity that can add extra pressure on the growth plate
- Having one leg shorter than the other which causes a pull on the Achilles tendon

What is the Treatment for Sever's Disease?

The primary goal for treatment will be to find relief from the pain. We want to do everything we can to get your child back into their favorite sports and activities again. Rest and avoiding all activities that add stress to the heel and Achilles will be the first step. This will reduce swelling and pain and should be followed until all symptoms are gone.

Dr. Danciger may also advise elevating the injured foot and applying ice for 20 minutes, two or three times a day. There may also be some leg and foot exercises that can strengthen and stretch muscles and tendons. Custom orthotics may also be very beneficial in supporting and stabilizing the foot. Casting is really only necessary in severe cases where the foot needs to be completely immobilized while the heel properly heals.

The good news is that this injury often goes away within a couple weeks to a couple of months with the right treatment. It can recur though if you are not monitoring your child's foot health or providing them with supportive, appropriate footwear.

If you have any concern at all about your child's foot health, or notice they are experiencing some of the symptoms described here, please call us today. We can provide expert, attentive care for your child's foot needs. Make an appointment by calling (760) 568-0108 or directly from our homepage.