

## Achilles Tendonitis

Your Achilles tendon is the largest tendon in the whole body. A tendon is a strong band of flexible (but inelastic) fibrous tissue. A tendon's job is to connect muscle to bone; in the Achilles tendon's case, it connects the bone of your heel to the muscles in your calf. Your Achilles tendon can withstand forces of 1,000 pounds or more! It also is the most frequently ruptured tendon, usually as a result of a sports injury. It's estimated that about 11% of running injuries are cases of Achilles tendonitis. Both professional and weekend athletes may suffer from Achilles tendonitis, a common overuse injury and inflammation of the tendon.

Tendonitis occurs from overuse. If the tendonitis is present for a long period of time it can become tendinosis (a degeneration of the tendon) which is a condition much harder to treat. This overuse can happen over a period of time or can happen over a weekend.

Achilles tendonitis can be recognized by the following symptoms:

- Pain starts out small and gradually gets worse over time
- Pain in the back of the leg, above the heel following exercise routine
- A bump/swelling along the back of the leg, on the Achilles tendon
- Stiffness in the tendon. This may ease up with use
- Tenderness/stiffness especially in the morning

Achilles tendonitis is often caused by any one of the following:

- Repetitive strain on the tendon
- Disregarding stretching and warming up before exercise
- Intense stair or hill climbing
- Sudden starts and stops (often in sports like tennis or basketball)
- Flat arches/feet can put more strain on the tendon
- New, intense exercises after not exercising for a while
- Running on hard or uneven surfaces
- Trauma to the tendon. Could occur when putting out extra effort, like in a sprint
- Worn out shoes or wearing shoes inappropriate for exercise

Treatment normally includes:

- A simple treatment may just involve RICE (rest, ice, elevation and compression)
- A bandage specifically designed to restrict motion of the tendon.
- Taking nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medication for a period of time. Note: Please consult your physician before taking any medication.
- Orthotics, which are corrective shoe inserts designed to help support the muscle and relieve stress on the tendon. Both nonprescription orthoses (such as a heel pads or over-the-counter shoe inserts) and prescribed custom orthotics may be recommended depending on the length and severity of the problem.
- Rest and switching to exercises that do not stress the tendon (such as swimming).
- Stretching and exercises to strengthen the weak muscle group in front of the leg, calf, and the upward foot flexors, as well as massage and ultrasound.
- More advanced cases of Achilles tendonitis may include immobilization through a boot or cast, and physical therapy.
- In extreme cases, surgery is performed to remove the fibrous tissue and repair any tears.

You can try to prevent Achilles tendonitis by taking a few precautions before and after exercising. Taking these precautions should significantly decrease your risk for developing Achilles tendonitis.

- Ease yourself into an exercise routine. Avoid doing "too much, too soon"
- Wear the appropriate shoes for the exercise. Certain shoes are meant for particular activities while others are inappropriate.
- Stretch before and after exercising. By stretching regularly, you are maintaining your tendon's flexibility
- Switch it up. Don't always do the same exercises. By engaging in different kinds of exercise, you can give your Achilles a break every once in a while

If you suffer with chronic pain in your Achilles tendon, the best thing to do is to set up an appointment with a professional like Coachella Valley podiatrist, Dr. Harvey Danciger. Dr. Danciger is happy to help patients relieve their foot pain and get back on their feet.