

Achilles Tendonitis (A.T)

This is what happens when you over use the Achilles (uh-KILL-eez) tendon, the band of tissue that connects calf muscles at the back of the lower leg to your heel bone.

It is common in runners who run longer or harder than they usually do. It's also common in middle-aged people who play sports, such as tennis or basketball, only on the weekends.

Most cases of this can be treated with simple, at-home care with the help of your provider. Doing exercises as told can make you less likely to get it back again. More-serious cases can lead to tendon tears (ruptures) that may require surgery.

Symptoms

The pain usually begins as a mild ache in the back of the leg or above the heel after running or other sports activity. Episodes of more-severe pain may occur after prolonged running, stair climbing or sprinting. You might also have tenderness or stiffness, especially in the morning, which usually gets better with mild activity.

When to See a Healthcare Provider

If you have more pain around the Achilles tendon, call your healthcare provider. If the pain is much worse, get help right away. You may have a torn (ruptured) Achilles tendon.

Prevention

As you get older, your tendons are not as good at stretching and you are more likely to get hurt if you aren't careful. Always warm up before exercise and wear shoes with good support. Don't overdo exercise, but instead slowly and surely build up the amount of time you exercise.

Risk Factors

- Achilles tendinitis is more common in **men**.
- **Age**. Achilles tendinitis is more common as you age.
- **Physical problems**. A naturally flat arch in your foot can put more strain on the Achilles tendon.

- Obesity and tight calf muscles also can increase tendon strain.
- **Poor choices**. Running in worn-out shoes can increase your risk of Achilles tendinitis. Tendon pain occurs more frequently in cold weather than in warm weather, and running on hilly terrain also can predispose you to Achilles injury.
- **Medical problems**. People who have psoriasis or high blood pressure are at higher risk of developing this.
- **Medications**. Certain types of antibiotics can increase your risk of getting A.T.

Treatment and Drugs: Tendinitis usually responds well to treatment. If your signs and symptoms don't go away, then tell someone.

Medication

If over-the-counter pain medications — such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB, others) or naproxen (Aleve) — aren't enough, your doctor might prescribe stronger medications to reduce swelling and relieve pain.

Physical Therapy

- **Exercises**. Therapists often prescribe specific stretching and strengthening exercises to promote healing and strengthening of the Achilles tendon and its supporting structures. A special type of strengthening called "eccentric" strengthening, involving a slow let down of a weight after raising it, has been found to be especially helpful for persistent Achilles problems.
- **Orthotic devices**. A shoe insert or wedge that slightly elevates your heel can relieve strain on the tendon and reduce pressure on the tendon.

Surgery

If several months of more-conservative treatments don't work or if the tendon has torn, your doctor may suggest surgery to repair your Achilles tendon.