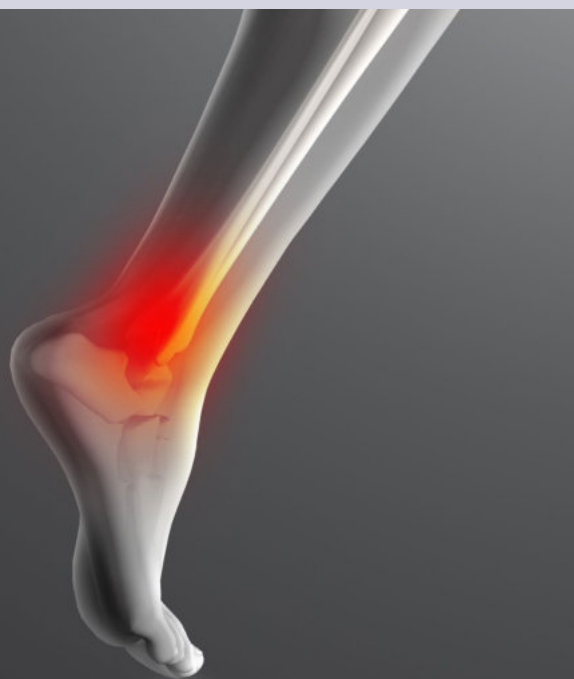


Achilles Tendinopathy



Achilles tendinopathy refers to injury to the Achilles tendon and can be either tendinitis (inflammation to the tendon) or tendinosis (chronic tendon injury). The Achilles tendon is very strong and flexible and is located at the back of the ankle. It connects the calf muscle to the bone in the heel of your foot (calcaneum). It's the largest tendon in your body and allows you to run, walk, jump and go up and down stairs.



SYMPTOMS

The main symptoms of Achilles tendinopathy is pain located at the back of the ankle which is tender on palpation. Stiffness and pain is more prominent first thing in the morning or following inactivity. Initially pain may reduce following activity but over time, as the injury is further aggravated through continuous strain, exercise may become difficult and swelling may also be prominent.

If you experience sudden pain, swelling and bruising within your heel or calf you may have completely torn your Achilles tendon. Please do seek urgent medical attention.



DIAGNOSTICS

A Primary Care provider or a PAM MSK therapist will be able to discuss your symptoms and provide adequate treatment support. In some cases further examinations may be required and this will either be an ultrasound scan or MRI. In cases where surgery is likely to be required a referral to an Orthopedic Specialist may be required via your GP.

Common Risk factors for Achilles pain

There are a number of common risk factors associated with achilles tendinopathies, these are:

- Rapid increase in the amount of time spent on the activity.
- Genetics - family history
- Health issues such as hypertension, diabetes
- Poorly fitting footwear or change in footwear
- Change in working/training surfaces e.g running on treadmill to road running
- Poor lower limb mechanics
- Some types of antibiotics (eg, ciprofloxacin, ofloxacin) can cause inflammation of tendons and predispose them to rupture

TREATMENT

Treatment approaches will depend on the severity of tissue damage sustained and the amount of time you have been experiencing Achilles discomfort. The following self-management approaches to Achilles pain should be considered

SELF-MANAGEMENT APPROACH



Initial onset (0-7 days)

- Immediate relief of acute Achilles tendinopathy is the RICE process (rest, ice, compression, elevation). Please ensure you don't apply ice directly to your skin as it can damage it.
- The use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).
- Reduce or stop the activity that has caused the injury and exercise can be restarted when pain allows.
- Wear supportive footwear.
- Gentle stretching of the front and back of the lower leg.



7-10 days

- If no improvement 1 week later then further rehabilitation stretches would be advisable, where we look at lengthening the calf muscle group whilst applying a load. The exercise should be completed twice daily and 3 x 15 repetitions over a 3 month period whilst increasing load. Please note it is not uncommon to experience some discomfort when completing this exercise.
- Visit GP if further pain relief is required.
- Further assistance can be obtained by one of the PAM Physiotherapy/Rehab team who will be able to assist with further advice and rehab support.



RECOVERY

What is the expected timeframe for Achilles tendon recovery?

Achilles tendinopathies usually take up to 12 weeks for full recovery. In cases where surgery is required then recovery may take up to 6 months.

What if my Achilles pain remains following 6 months?

If following conservative treatment symptoms persist it would be advisable to see an Orthopedic Specialist. In cases that don't recover >6 months surgery may be required. Corticosteroid injections must be avoided.



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