

Achilles Tendon Injuries

What is the Achilles Tendon?

- Longest tendon in the body
- Runs down the back of the lower leg
- Connects the calf muscle to the heel bone
- Helps to lift the heel off the ground
 - Walking
 - Climbing stairs
 - Raise up on tiptoes

Types of Achilles Tendon Injuries

- Achilles tendon rupture
- Achilles tendonitis and Achilles tendinosis

Achilles Tendon Rupture

- Occurs when stretched beyond its capacity
- Partial tear
- Complete tear

What Causes a Rupture?

- Sudden dorsiflexion (backward bending) of the ankle
 - Tripping and landing on the foot in a certain way
 - Jumping, pivoting, sudden accelerations in running
- Less commonly: illness or medications

Symptoms of an Achilles Tendon Rupture

- Sudden pain (like a kick or stab)
- Pain may then subside to a dull ache
- Popping or snapping sensation
- Swelling
- Difficult to walk up stairs or uphill
- Difficult to rise on toes

Treatment Options for an Achilles Tendon Rupture

- Nonsurgical treatment
 - Higher likelihood of re-tearing the tendon for some patients
 - Cast, walking boot or brace
 - Physical therapy
- Surgical Treatment
 - Lower likelihood of re-tearing the tendon
 - May increase push-off strength
 - May improve muscle function and ankle movement
 - After surgery: cast/walking boot, physical therapy

Achilles Tendonitis and Tendonosis

- Achilles tendonitis
 - Inflammation of the tendon
- Achilles tendonosis
 - Degeneration of the tendon

What Causes Achilles Tendonitis and Tendonosis?

- Overuse
 - Sudden increase in activity without warming up
 - Tendon isn't properly stretched
 - Leads to micro-injury of tendon fibers
- Wearing high heels or clogs long-term

Symptoms of Achilles Tendonitis/Tendonosis

- Tendonitis
 - Pain (aching, burning, stiffness, soreness, tenderness)
 - Often worse after sleep or rest
 - Improves with motion, but then gets worse
- Tendonosis
 - Maybe pain
 - Swelling
 - Bump(s)

Treatment of Achilles Tendonitis/Tendonosis

- Nonsurgical strategies
 - Rest
 - Icing
 - Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs
 - Night splint
 - Physical therapy
 - Heel lifts
- Surgery

For Injuries to the Achilles Tendon...
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Care

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