

Achilles Tendonitis/Tendonosis

What is the Achilles?

This is where the large muscles of your calf (gastrocnemius and soleus) attach at the heel bone (calcaneus). The two muscles join into a common tendon that attaches to the back of the heel. This tendon is commonly referred to as the Achilles tendon. The primary use of this muscle group is to assist with postural support and to point ones toes down.



Causes of Tendinitis

There are several causes associated with inflammation of the Achilles tendon, such as biomechanical anomalies in the joints of the ankle or foot, inadequate shoe wear, overuse of the tendon, or executing a new activity. The inflammation is due to increased abnormal stresses to these muscles or the tendon, usually in the region of the Achilles with poor blood supply. Signs of inflammation usually present itself as point tenderness in the Achilles about 4cm from the heel, pain with placing stresses across the Achilles, swelling, stiffness at the heel that is worse with activity such as running or jumping.



What is tendinosis?

Tendinosis can be very common. It is due to repetitive motion that causes micro-injuries that accumulate with time. Collagen breaks down and the tendon tries to repair itself, but the cells produce new collagen with an abnormal structure and composition. Tendinosis is an accumulation over time of small-scale injuries that don't heal properly; it is a chronic injury of failed healing. This abnormal structure is far less strong and more prone to injury.

Treatment

Treatment for this condition should always be headed-up by seeing your physician or an orthopedic specialist. For the most part, conservative treatment initially consists of attempts to decrease stress and inflammation to the area. This is typically done with the use of icing, possible heel lifts placed in ones shoes, and activity modification to decrease use of the musculature that causes stress to this area. However, if the true cause

of the injury is not identified and treated, the symptoms will continue to occur. If conservative treatment is not successful, your physician may prescribe physical therapy treatment. Physical therapy treatment may use different approaches and techniques to decrease inflammation and increase functional range of motion, such as modalities, soft tissue, and joint mobilizations. In addition, the therapist will evaluate your activities and biomechanics, possibly assess your gait through video to possibly solve the cause behind, and solution to, the stresses in the tendon. Finally, the therapist may prescribe therapeutic activities to re-educate the damaged muscle tissue.

If you would like more information about this issue, or need a physician referral in your area, please call us at 310-860-9720.