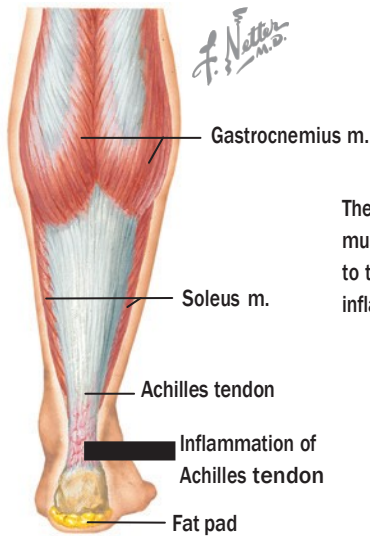
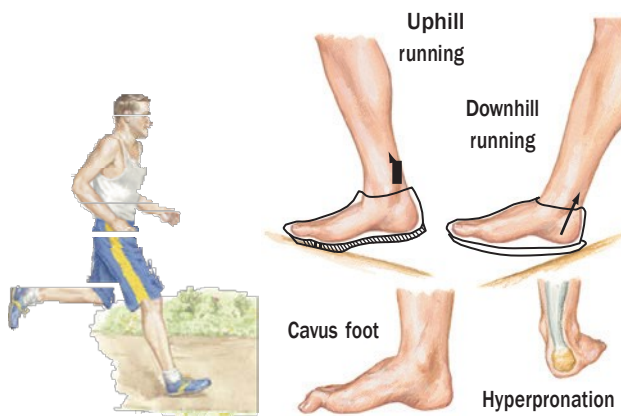


MANAGING YOUR ACHILLES TENDINITIS



The Achilles tendon connects calf muscles (gastrocnemius, soleus) to the heel. Achilles tendinitis is inflammation of this tendon.



Causes include sports and activities, such as basketball and running, that stress calf muscles and the Achilles tendon. Others include overuse, flattened arch, high arch (cavus foot), trauma, and infection. Inward rotating of the foot during walking (hyperpronation) can also cause it.



Symptoms include a dull ache or pain during walking or when rising on the toes. Others are tenderness or swelling over the tendon, stiffness, and a crackling sound when touching or moving the tendon. Your doctor will use symptoms and physical examination for diagnosis.

What Is Achilles Tendinitis?

A tendon is a band of tough tissue that usually connects muscle to bone. The Achilles tendon connects calf muscles to the heel. Achilles tendinopathy includes two conditions: tendinitis and tendinosis. Tendinitis is inflammation (swelling) of this tendon. Tendinosis means there are tiny tears in tissue in and around the tendon caused by overuse.

What Causes Achilles Tendinitis?

Causes include sports activities, such as basketball, that put stress on calf muscles and Achilles tendon. Other causes include sudden increase in intensity or frequency of exercise (overuse), poor conditioning, flattened arch, trauma, and infection.

Jumping or trauma can also cause the tendon to rupture (tear) partly or completely.

What Are the Symptoms of Achilles Tendinitis?

Symptoms include a dull ache or pain when pushing off the foot during walking or when rising on the toes. Others are tenderness or swelling over the Achilles tendon, stiffness that gets better with walking, and a crackling sound when touching or moving the tendon.

How Is Achilles Tendinitis Diagnosed?

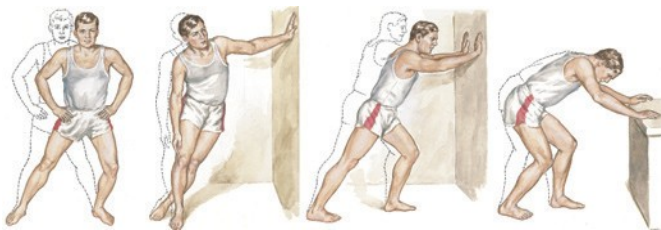
The doctor uses a history and physical examination for diagnosis. The tendon will be painful on touching and can be made worse with flexing the ankle so tension is put on the tendon. The doctor will squeeze the calf to check for Achilles tendon rupture (tear).

X-rays and MRI may be done when the diagnosis is unclear.

Self-care methods include rest, ice, compression, and elevation (RICE). Over-the-counter drugs such as NSAIDs may relieve pain.



Other treatments are orthotic devices and heel pads or cups for shoes. Physical therapy and changes in your exercises may let the tendon heal and recover muscle strength and range of motion at the ankle. The last resort is surgery to remove inflamed tissue around the tendon.



Use proper conditioning to prevent another tendon injury. Stretch daily, before and after exercising. Always do warm-up and cool-down exercises. Use toe raises to strengthen calf muscles.



Cross-train. Do high-impact activities, such as running and jumping, and then low-impact activities, such as cycling and swimming.

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How Is Achilles Tendinitis Treated?

Self-care methods include rest, ice, compression, and elevation (RICE). Over-the-counter drugs such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) may relieve pain. Improved stretching, night splints (to stretch the tendon), and immobilization for 2 to 4 weeks may help. Other treatments are orthotic devices (shoe inserts to raise the heel) and heel pads or cups for shoes. Severe cases may need walking boots and crutches. Physical therapy and maybe changes in the exercise program may let the tendon heal. The last resort is surgery to remove inflamed tissue around the tendon.

If tendinitis is untreated and the tendon continues to have small tears caused by exercise and repeated movement, the tendon can rupture. Then, surgery is needed

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Achilles Tendinitis:

- ✓ **DO** use proper conditioning to prevent another tendon injury. Stretch daily, before and after exercising. Always do warm-up exercises and cool down after exercising.
- ✓ **DO** cross-train. Do high-impact activities, such as running and jumping, and then low-impact activities, such as cycling and swimming.
- ✓ **DO** strengthen calf muscles. Exercises such as toe raises trains the muscle-tendon unit to handle more force. These are best done by returning slowly to the ground after each toe raise.
- ✓ **DO** follow physical therapy and exercise instructions to recover muscle strength and range of motion at the ankle.
- ✓ **DO** take pain medicines as prescribed.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have increasing calf pain, cannot rise onto tiptoe or walk, or have increased swelling at the injury site.
- X **DON'T** wear poorly fitting shoes. Exercise shoes should cushion the heel and have firm arch support.
- X **DON'T** do anything that causes too much force on the tendon until it's healed.
- X **DON'T** have frequent cortisone or steroid injections around the Achilles tendon. They can increase the risk of tendon rupture.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- American Medical Society for Sports Medicine
Tel: (913) 327-1415
Website: <http://www.newamssm.org>