

Patient Information Leaflet

Achilles tendonitis

What is it ?

Tendons are subject to wear and tear, or “degeneration”. When it occurs in the Achilles tendon, it can result in pain and swelling (‘Tendinitis’).

There is increased pain during or after running or walking. Some people suffer painful flare-ups, with the symptoms subsiding in between these flare-ups.

The exact cause of the condition is not known, and it can be difficult to treat especially in professional athletes.

How can it be treated?

Treatment of a flare-up is rest.

There are a number of ways of resting the tendon:

- Reduce running/walking**
- Heel lift shoe inserts**
- Immobilisation in a cast or “walker boot”**

Additionally, your doctor may recommend anti-inflammatory painkillers during a flare-up, especially if there is redness and swelling.

The mainstay of treatment is prevention of flare-ups, however. A number of treatments have been tried, including laser, ultrasound, electrical stimulation and shock-wave therapy.

The most effective treatment is thought to be a particular regime of stretching exercises, called Eccentric Strengthening. This strict regime can be up to 95% effective in 3 months.

Eccentric exercise therapy

The eccentric exercise therapy of *Alfredson* consists of three sets, starting in toe stand, of fifteen repetitions of eccentric calf exercises with straight and flexed legs.

To come to the toe stand both legs are used. The three sets of fifteen calf exercises with straight and flexed legs have to be done twice a day.

The program needs to be followed for 12 weeks, and not to be stopped if it is painful .

When the exercises are pain free you need to add weight till the exercise is painful again in the Achilles tendon. You can add weight for example to use a backpack with weights, books or bottles of water.

Having Achilles tendinosis does theoretically put you at risk of tendon rupture, but conditioning your tendon with the above exercises is not thought to increase this risk.

If you think you have ruptured your tendon, you should seek medical advice immediately.