

Achilles tendinopathy self-treatment guide

Advice and exercises for patients



If any of the advice given in this leaflet makes your symptoms worse or creates a new pain, please stop and seek advice.

Podiatry telephone number: **0131 536 1627**

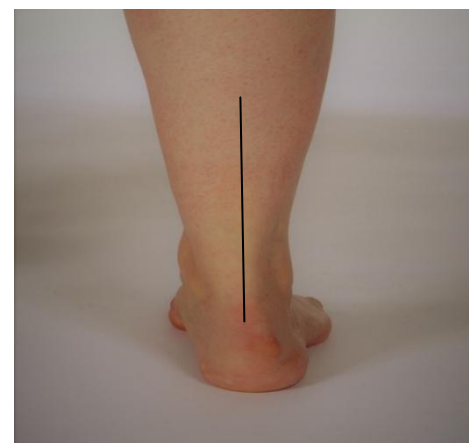
What is Achilles tendon pain?

Achilles Tendinopathy is a condition characterised by pain, swelling and weakness of the Achilles tendon. Pain may be located on the back of your heel bone or slightly above it.

Causes

Some of the most common causes of Achilles tendon pain are as follows:

- Wearing ill-fitting or badly styled footwear, such as high heels, hard thin soles or soles that are too soft
- Being overweight
- If you have recently started being more active/increased your activity level
- Activities/occupations that involve placing large amounts of pressure and/or strain on the foot and ankle, such as running or jumping
- Tight or weak muscles in the lower leg and/or foot
- Direct injury
- Foot deformity
- Arthritis in the foot or ankle
- Some underlying medical conditions.



Signs and symptoms

- Pain on initial steps or after a period of rest, particularly first thing in the morning
- Pain can be felt during exercise but is often worse after
- Swelling and/or pain around the tendon or calf
- Pain on touch or pressure from footwear.

What can I do to help myself?

It is important to try to work out what leads to your pain. Avoiding the causes or triggers of painful symptoms is one of the most important parts of helping your recovery.

Consider the following options:

Footwear

The shoe style you wear should accommodate the width and shape of your foot and have semi rigid soles- avoid narrow, pointed shoes. The heel height should be between 1cm and 4 cm and preferably have a firm fastening such as lacing. Try to avoid shoes that cause you more pain.

Modify activity levels

It is good to keep moving and exercising but you may benefit from considering alternative ways of keeping active temporarily. Lower impact activities such as cycling or swimming may be a good option for you. If this does not help, a period of rest may be suitable.

Ice packs

Apply an ice pack to the painful site for 20 minutes, 2-3 times daily (ensure ice is not applied directly to the skin- a cloth may be a useful barrier).

Aim for a healthy body weight

Being overweight increases pressure and strain to the affected area and could reduce your chances of successful resolution. If you need support with this please speak with your GP or the Get Moving service.

Pain medication

Some pain medication may help to reduce your symptoms and help you to move more comfortably. Discuss this with your Pharmacist or GP.

Being patient

This is not always easy but we know it may take time for symptoms to settle.

Exercises

Please see back page of this leaflet.

Exercises



Heel raise:

Slowly rise onto your tip toes.

Hold for 5 seconds.

Take 5 seconds to lower your heels to the ground, maintaining control throughout. Repeat as many times as you can to complete one set. Stop when you are too tired or limited by pain.

Do 2-3 sets every 2nd day.

If you can manage this easily attempt the exercise on one foot ensuring you have something to hold onto for balance.



If you can manage the above exercise easily on one foot, attempt the exercise on a step with both feet. Again you can progress to using just one foot if you are able.

Stand next to a wall or a steady surface to hold onto if needed.

With the above exercises, if you are finding them too difficult you can start your exercise programme from sitting, if you are finding them too easy you should progress onto the next stage.

What if my symptoms fail to resolve?

If after 6 weeks following the above advice your problem has not improved, seek advice from a Podiatrist.

Useful Apps

NHS 24 MSK help

Useful web links

For further exercises and information

- www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints/exercises/exercises-for-foot-problems
- <https://livewellwithpain.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/10-footsteps-v2.pdf>
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=3F5Sly9JQao&feature=emb_logo
- www.edinburghleisure.co.uk/get-moving
- https://policyonline.nhslothian.scot/Policies/PatientInformation/Achilles_tendinopathy.pdf

