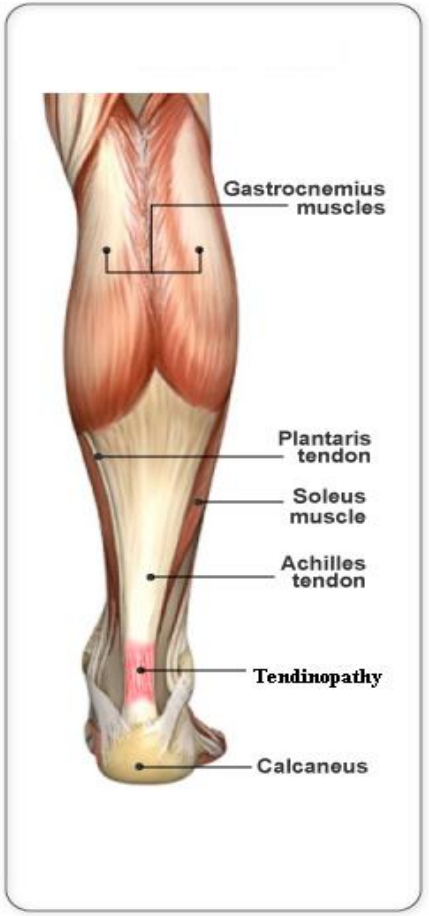
Wiltshire HEALTH AND CARE

NHS

Patient Information

Achilles Tendinopathy



How long will it last?
The process of recovery will vary according to the **severity** of your symptoms, other **contributing factors** and your **compliance with Physiotherapy rehabilitation**. With the right exercises, most people make a good recovery within a period of **3 months**, but occasionally symptoms can last longer. If this is the case, your Physiotherapist will liaise with your GP about other possible management options.
These could include;

- Referral to a **podiatrist** for biomechanical assessment and provision of insoles for your shoes.
- **GTN** patches (Glyceryl trinitrate) are sometimes used over the area to help with pain. Your GP can advise and prescribe these if needed.
- **Surgery** is rarely needed but possible to remove nodules or adhesions and encourage normal healing within the tendon.

Further information

Below are the telephone numbers for the Community Outpatient Physiotherapy departments. Please call your local department for any further information/guidance;

Chippenham - 01249 456451
Devizes - 01380 732520
Malmesbury - 01666 827583
Melksham - 01225 701027
Salisbury - 01722 336262 Ext 4425/4413
Savernake - 01672 517310
Trowbridge – 01225 711341
Warminster – 01985 224716

Useful websites
http://www.patient.co.uk/health/achilles-tendinopathy

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Review March 2017

What is your Achilles tendon?
The **Achilles Tendon** is fibrous tissue that connects the muscles of the calf (Gastrocnemius & Soleus) to the heel. Contracting the calf muscles pulls the Achilles tendon, which pushes the foot downward. This contraction enables standing on the toes, walking, running, and jumping.

What is an Achilles tendinopathy?
It involves damage to some of the fibres of the tendon. This can be after an injury or it can occur if the tendon is stressed repetitively over time. It is thought to be due to repeated small tears (microtrauma) which do not heal fully and lead to loss of the normal strength of the tendon. You may also get local thickening of the tendon.

What causes achilles tendinopathy?
There can be a number of contributing factors including;

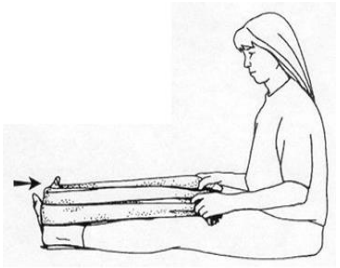
- Overuse of the tendon
- Sudden changes in activity e.g. increases in running or jumping activities.
- Poor flexibility caused by tight muscles e.g. hamstrings
- Inappropriate footwear
- Long periods of inactivity followed by bursts of activity

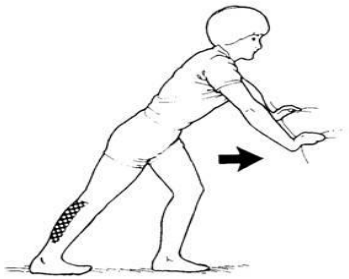
What are the symptoms?

- Pain at the back of the ankle, just above the heel bone.
- Pain and stiffness in the tendon especially in the morning or after periods of rest.
- Pain after exercise and walking, especially up hill or up stairs.
- Tenderness over the tendon.
- Swelling, thickening or nodules over the Achilles tendon.

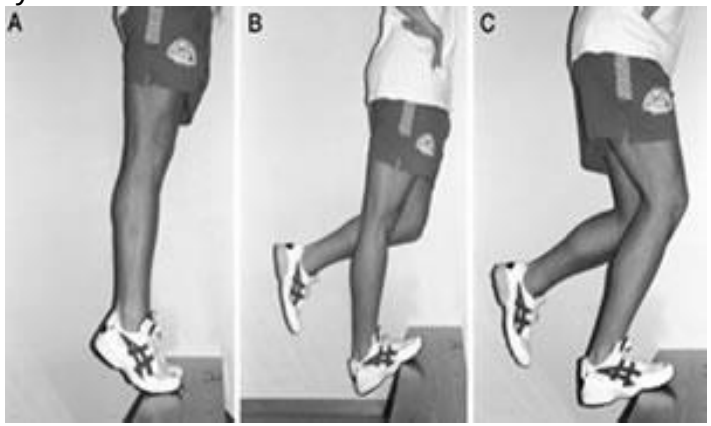
What can I do to help myself?

- **Rest** – It is important initially to avoid your aggravating activities such as running, to prevent repetitive trauma to the tendon and allow it to heal.
- **Ice -** This should be applied to the tendon twice a day for 10 minutes. Use an ice pack or bag of frozen peas wrapped up in a damp tea towel. **Do not** apply ice directly to the skin.
- **Stretches –** These will help to improve the flexibility of the tendon. They should be held for 30 seconds and completed at least 3 times a day. Refer to the diagrams below for examples. The towel stretch is a great one to do before you get out of bed in the morning.





- **Eccentric strengthening exercise –** Try to do this twice a day for a minimum of 12 weeks.



A Stand on the edge of a step with both feet and push up onto your toes with your weight on your unaffected leg.
B Whilst on your tip toes, transfer your body weight onto your affected leg, then over a period of 5 seconds, **slowly lower** your affected heel over the edge of the step. Repeat **A** and **B** 10-15 times.
C You should also do this exact exercise with a bent leg.
Use ice for 10 minutes after completing the exercises.