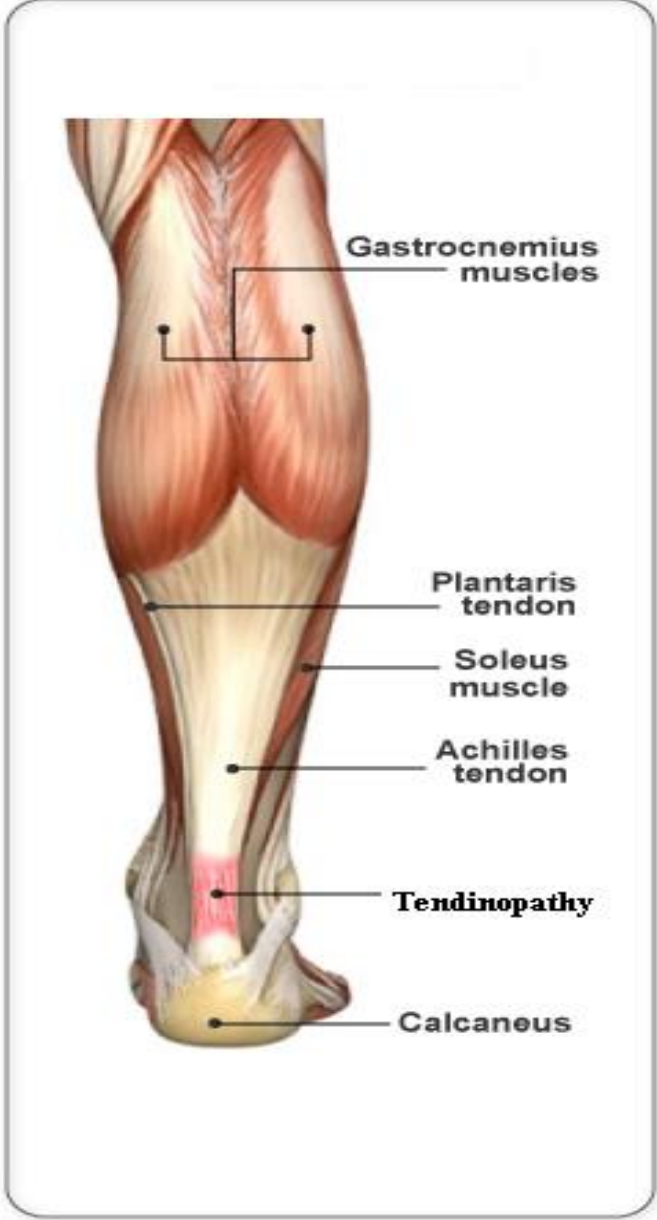


Achilles Tendinopathy



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Achilles Tendinopathy



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 changes 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 that these changes can lead to loss of the normal strength of the tendon, which can then lead to pain, as the tendon is not tolerating the demands placed upon it. 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. increase 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 uphill or upstairs.
- Tenderness over the tendon.
- Swelling, thickening or nodules over the Achilles tendon.

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.

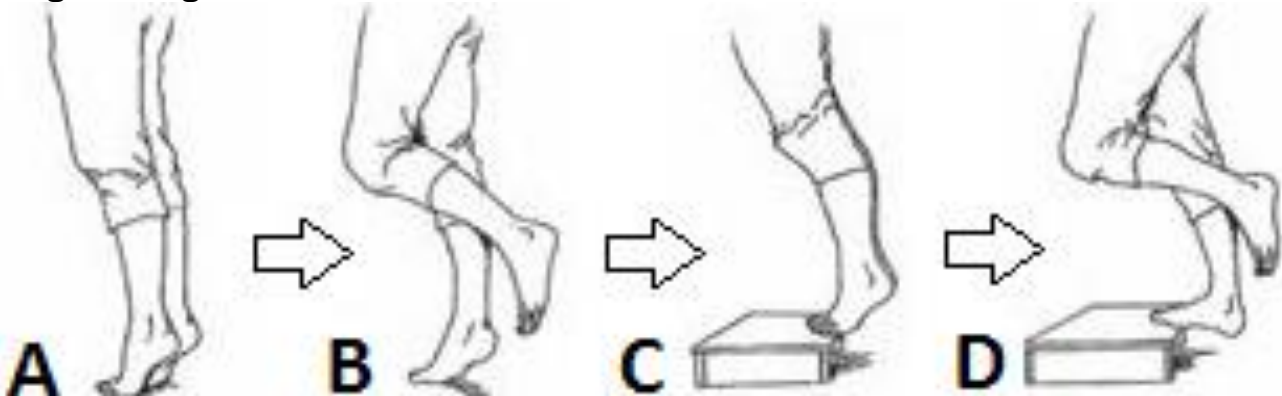
Achilles Tendinopathy



What can I do to help myself?

- **Rest** – Short term rest can be beneficial but prolonged rest should be avoided. Decreasing or Modifying your activities can help alleviate symptoms, but don't stop being active.
- **Heel Raise** – These can be placed in BOTH shoes to try and offload the Achilles tendon. Alternatively wearing shoes with a bigger heel can help.
- **Ice** - This should be applied to the tendon twice a day for 10-15 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.

Strengthening Exercise



A On a flat surface, with both feet slowly push up onto your toes (see picture 'A') over 3 seconds and then slowly lower yourself back down over 3 seconds. If needed, you can place your hands on a wall for support. Every other day, repeat this movement 8 times, for 4 sets, with a 2 minute rest in between each set.

B Once you can comfortably complete exercise 'A', progress to completing the same exercise but on one foot (affected side). If needed, you can use the unaffected side for some assistance.

C Once you can comfortably complete exercise 'B', progress to doing exercise 'A' but on a step (see picture 'C'), allowing your heel to drop below the step as you slowly lower. Click link for VIDEO: <https://youtu.be/8l4AJt0xs4U>

D Once you can comfortably complete exercise 'C', progress to doing the same exercise on one foot. It is beneficial to strengthening both sides to reduce the risk of future injury. Click link for VIDEO: https://youtu.be/6sLxo_Oc4NA

** The pacing of this exercise is very important. It is useful to use an external cue to pace your 3 seconds up and 3 seconds down. To pace yourself try using a Metronome 60BPM, clock or the video links provided.

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Further Information

If you would like to seek the advice of a physiotherapist, there are a number of options within Wiltshire. Please speak to your GP practice about the ways you can be referred.

Useful websites:

<https://www.activewiltshire.org.uk/>

Here you will find information on improving your activity level and details of what is available in your local area.

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/public-health-weight>

Here you will find information about weight management options in your local area.

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/public-health-trainers>

Health Trainers work on a one to one basis to support behaviour change and improve health. They concentrate on behaviours associated with ill health including unhealthy eating often linked to obesity, stop or reduce smoking, sensible drinking, increasing physical activity, building confidence and motivation to change and boosting self-esteem, they also signpost and support clients to access other services and activities where appropriate.

Safeguarding

Wiltshire Health and Care has a strong commitment to care that is safe, of a high quality and that upholds our patients' rights. All our patients have the right to live lives free from abuse or neglect and, where they are able, to make or be supported to make informed decisions and choices about their treatment, care and support. Where patients are not able to make their own decisions, Wiltshire Health and Care staff are committed to ensuring that treatment, care and support is undertaken in accordance with the person's best interests. In order to fulfil these commitments, Wiltshire Health and Care follow the Safeguarding principles and responsibilities laid out in Sections 42-46 of the Care Act (2014) and are informed by, and apply, the guiding principles and provisions of the Mental Capacity Act (2005).

If you or your carer have any concerns about abuse, neglect or your rights in relation to care provided by Wiltshire Health and Care or any other agency or individual, please raise this directly with any Wiltshire Health and Care staff or contact the Safeguarding Adults Team by telephone on: 0300 4560111.

Wiltshire Health and Care Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any questions, or concerns, suggestions or compliments about our service, please speak to a member of staff.

This information sheet is available in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 0300 1237797 and PALS.wiltshirehealthandcare@nhs.net