

What is Achilles Tendonitis:

According to the Greek myth, Achilles was vulnerable only at his heel. It's a trait that he must have passed down to all other humans when he gave his name to the Achilles tendon, which connects the calf muscles to the heel bone.

The Achilles tendon is the largest tendon in the human body and can withstand forces of 1,000 pounds or more. But it is also the most frequently ruptured tendon, and both professional and weekend athletes can suffer from Achilles tendonitis, a common overuse injury and inflammation of the tendon.



What triggers Achilles tendonitis?

- Rapidly increasing your running mileage or speed
- Adding hill running or stair climbing to your training routine
- Starting up too quickly after a layoff
- Trauma caused by sudden and/or hard contraction of the calf muscles when putting out extra effort such as in a final sprint
- Overuse resulting from the natural lack of flexibility in the calf muscles

Symptoms of Achilles Tendonitis:

- Mild pain after exercise or running that gradually worsens
- A noticeable sense of sluggishness in your leg
- Episodes of diffuse or localized pain, sometimes severe, along the tendon during or a few hours after running
- Morning tenderness about an inch and a half above the point where the Achilles attaches to the heel bone
- Stiffness that generally diminishes as the tendon warms up with use

Treatments:

- Rest
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medication
- Orthoses to relieve the stress on the tendon
- A bandage designed to restrict motion of the tendon
- Stretching, massage, ultrasound and appropriate exercises
- Surgery (last resort)

Tips to Help Prevent Achilles Tendonitis:

- Choose your running shoes carefully, use prescribed orthotics if necessary
- Know your limits and follow a sensible program
- Walk and stretch to warm up before running
- Focus on stretching & strengthening the muscles in the calf
- Increase your running distance & speed gradually, no more than 10% a week
- Avoid unaccustomed strenuous sprinting, hill running
- Cool down properly after exercise