

Lakeview Community Wellness Center Orthopaedic Connection

Painful Achilles Tendon

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

The Achilles is the largest tendon in the body. The name of course, comes from the Greek hero whose mother held him by the heel to dip him in the River Styx.

The Achilles tendon is large and strong, attaching the calf muscles to the heel bone. It allows you to walk, run, jump and push up on your toes lifting the heel off the ground.

Tendinitis

Tendinitis refers to inflammation of a tendon. It typically comes on from overuse in most of us. A specific injury is not usually present. Stress to the tendon caused by an increase in a repeated activity is common.

- Walking uphill
- Running
- Squatting
- Excess weight can put you at risk
- Weekend sports like tennis

Symptoms

Dramatically, a feeling of being shot in the Achilles area and feeling a snap indicates a tendon rupture. Usually though symptoms begin somewhat more slowly.

- Mild ache or pain at the back of the heel
- Tenderness in Achilles area
- Stiffness in the morning
- Sharp pain after activity

Tendinitis In Early Stages

In the early stage of tendinitis these things may help.

- Activity. Avoid straining the tendon as in running, jumping, tennis or walking up hills. People in San Francisco have a lot of Achilles tendinitis!
- Massage the tendon with ice for 10 minutes three times per day.
- Non prescription anti-inflammatory medications can help. Try Advil, Motrin or similar. Tylenol is for pain, but is not anti-inflammatory.

Stretching

As pain and irritation gradually diminish, calf and Achilles stretching can be helpful. Keep feet flat, lean into a wall stretching the back of the ankle and Achilles.

Footwear

Get a decent pair of athletic shoes and put 3/8 to 1/2 felt heel lift in them. Do this first before you consider orthotics. When symptoms completely subside you can take the lifts out of the shoes.

If these measures don't help, you will have to come back to find out what else I may need to do. I'll explain that next week.

Please remember that anyone can make an appointment to see Dr. Haverbush at his office in Alma, at 315 Warwick Dr., across from Gratiot Medical Center. Call 989-463-6092 to make an appointment.

And don't forget every article I have written for Lakeview Area News is on my Website, www.orthopodsurgeon.com. Check it out. I specialize in you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush