

# Achilles Tendonopathy

## Information and Exercise Leaflet for Patient's and Carers

### What is the Achilles tendon?

The Achilles tendon (or heel cord) is the thick strap that can be felt running down the back of the calf into the heel.

When the Achilles tendon pulls on the heel it makes us go up on our tiptoes, or pushes us forwards when walking or running.

### What is Achilles Tendonopathy?

Tendonopathy will often develop gradually. The Achilles tendon becomes more painful and a swelling may develop at the tendon. At first this may be noticeable during sporting activities but later it may become increasingly difficult to walk because of the painful tendon.

### What can I do to help myself?

#### Activity level:

When undertaking recreational activities, e.g. walking, you may wish to initially reduce the distance you walk in order to reduce the aggravating stresses going through the tissues.

If you do sports, you may need to stop or reduce your levels initially, especially if it is an intense sport with high impact levels.

Later when it is more settled and you gradually return to sport, you may need to warm up for longer and do plenty of Achilles stretches.

#### Footwear:

Changing to well cushioned footwear and a softer running surface may help.

#### Ice:

Ice may be used to give you pain relief and help decrease any inflammation in the tissues.

- Apply ice to the painful area for 15 minutes up to 3 times per day.
- Use an ice pack wrapped in a wet towel.
- **DO NOT** use ice if you have any circulatory problems or poor skin sensation.
- If the skin becomes uncomfortable during the ice application, remove immediately.

**Stretches:**

As advised by your Physiotherapist.

**Exercise 1**



- Place the affected leg at the back ensuring the foot is pointing directly forwards.
- With the knee straight and the heel on the floor, lean forwards slightly.
- You should feel a stretch at the top of the calf.
- Hold for 30 seconds and do 3 repetitions.

**Exercise 2**



- Place the affected leg at the back ensuring the foot is pointing directly forwards.
- Bend both knees to feel a stretch in the lower calf of the back leg.
- Hold for 30 seconds and do 3 repetitions

**Painkillers:**

Consult your GP or local pharmacist who will advise you on which medication is suitable for you to take.

**Please note that it can take approximately 7 days to begin to improve and between 6-12 weeks to fully resolve. Recreational activities should be gradually built into as the symptoms reduce.**

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