

Achilles Tendonitis

The Achilles tendon is the largest tendon in the human body and can withstand forces of 1,000 pounds or more. But it also the most frequently ruptured tendon.

Both professional and weekend athletes can suffer from Achilles tendonitis, a common overuse injury and inflammation of the tendon.

Events that can cause Achilles tendonitis may include:

- Hill running or stair climbing
- Overuse resulting from the natural lack of flexibility in the calf muscles
- Rapidly increasing mileage or speed
- 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



Symptoms include

Achilles tendonitis often begins with mild pain after exercise or running that gradually worsens.

- Recurring 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 tendon is attached to the heel bone
- Sluggishness in your leg
- Mild or severe swelling
- Stiffness that generally diminishes as the tendon warms up with use

Treatment normally includes:

- A wrap specifically designed to restrict motion of the tendon
- Immobilization on a walking boot
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication
- Orthoses, which are devices to help support the muscle and relieve stress on the tendon such as a heel pad or shoe insert
- Rest and switching to another exercise, such as swimming, that does not stress the tendon
- Stretching, massage, ultrasound and appropriate exercises to strengthen the weak muscle group in front of the leg and the upward foot flexors
- In extreme cases, surgery is performed to remove the fibrous tissue and repair any tears