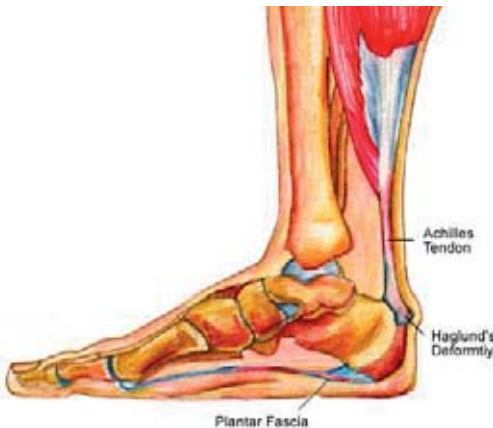




Common Running Injuries: ACHILLES TENDONITIS

Achilles tendonitis is one of the most common overuse injuries of the lower leg, which can affect runners. The Achilles tendon is the body's thickest and strongest tendon, located at the back of your ankle. It joins the three muscles of the calf to the heel bone. Because of the size and length of the Achilles tendon it has difficulty providing the whole of the tendon with an adequate blood supply; this is solved by a sheath (called the paratenon), which provides the tendon with an adequate blood supply. The tendon's potential for a poor blood supply can lead to slow healing of the tendon and hence poor recovery after injury.



The muscles acting on the Achilles tendon act to lift the heel, prevent the knee from locking into extension, and assist with control of the position of the foot and lower leg during walking and running.



Achilles Tendonitis

Risk Factors

● Poor Flexibility

Shortening of the calf muscles, not enough stretching or stretching incorrectly and even wearing high heels!

● Training Variables

Increased speed work, hill sessions or running on the forefoot.

● Overtraining

Insufficient recovery between sessions.

● Age

Degenerative changes in the tendon including a reduced blood supply.

● Inadequate Footwear

Poor choice of shoes can lead to inadequate shock absorbance, over-pronation, and heel counter rubbing can occur during running. Running in spikes can increase forces on the Achilles tendon.

● Inappropriate Footwear

Shoes that do not provide sufficient support or shock absorption: either the wrong shoe for you or a worn shoe.

Signs and Symptoms

Achilles tendonitis is usually noticed as an ache over the tendon when walking or running. Commonly there is pain when you start to run which fades and reappears again when you get to the end of the run

(when the tendon becomes fatigued). Pain can vary in intensity from an ache to a severe pain. You may be able to feel swelling and less commonly creaking in the tendon which is tender to touch. Often the swelling can be felt as a lump in the tendon an inch above the heel bone.

Treatment

It is extremely important to react quickly to any Achilles tendon pain as a chronic condition can be extremely difficult to treat, therefore it is important to quickly start P.R.I.C.E. treatment (Protect, Relative Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation) if there are any signs of Achilles tendonitis.

The initial step is to change any risk factors (see above).

- Stretch tight calf muscles.
- Deep frictional massage can increase blood flow and break adhesions that can form between the tendon and sheath.
- Strengthening the calf muscles - this should not be painful.
- Ultrasound can be used in the acute phase to help

Early intervention and treatment is the best way forward in relieving the problem. The Fitzwilliam hospital has access to specialist physiotherapists, radiography, scanning and also orthopaedic consultants if required, at a sensible cost and without referral from your Doctor. Ring 01733 842319.

Acknowledgement: We are grateful to the Fitzwilliam Hospital, Peterborough for assisting with this advisory leaflet.

FITZWILLIAM
HOSPITAL

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