

Achilles Tendinopathy

Advice & Management



Achilles Tendinopathy (AT) is a soft tissue injury that can affect both athletes and non-athletes. However, it is seen to be more prevalent in people who perform sports.

The cause still remains unclear, although one thing that we do know is that injury occurs when the tendon is unable to adapt to the strain placed

upon it; this leads to damage and pain. Other than exercising too much or participating in intense sports, the following factors can also lead to injury of the Achilles Tendon:

- Weight - particularly weight gain
- Diabetes - the changes in the body can lead to tendon injury
- Tight / weak calf muscles
- Poor core stability around the hip / knee
- Arthritis - stiffness in joints
- Poor training technique
- Poorly fitting footwear

Common Symptoms Associated with AT

- **Morning Stiffness**
Arising first thing in the morning and reducing after a few minutes of walking.
- **Tenderness**
The tendon can be very tender to touch, red, inflamed and also be hot to touch; in some people a lump can also develop over the tendon.
- **Variable Pain**
Many people find that they are able to exercise through the pain, and when resting the pain increases, others present with the opposite: they have pain during exercise which resolves when resting. Sometimes the pain is so intense that it may stop the individual from participating in any sporting activities.

The podiatrists at the WalkWell Clinic take a full and comprehensive history and perform a thorough examination of both feet and ankles. Once the diagnosis has been determined the podiatrist will work through protocol of treatment.

The treatment protocol is as follows:

1. Self-treatment

- **ICE** - we advise that you apply a pack of frozen peas wrapped in a tea towel to the back of the ankle for 10 minutes. You may ice as much as you require.

- **Simple Painkillers** - we understand that medication may not help everyone; however, it can help to take some paracetamol to ease the discomfort.

- **REST** - we advise that you rest as much as possible and refrain from performing any sporting activities in the initial stages. Once the stretching programme is underway and there is a noticeable improvement in the Achilles Tendon, we may suggest easing back into sports via swimming or cycling.

2. Simple Stretching

Performing simple calf stretches that the podiatrist will demonstrate for you.



3. Eccentric Exercises

The podiatrist will provide you will an eccentric exercise programme which is tailored to meet the demands of each individual. They also aim to strengthen and lengthen the Achilles Tendon and calf muscle group. (A separate sheet of exercises will be demonstrated and offered to you.) We expect the programme to take between 3-6 months to significantly improve your symptoms. However, we do anticipate that 70% of people are

able to return gradually to their sports after about 3 months.

******Please note that during the eccentric exercise programme you may experience an increase in pain, but this will reduce as you continue your rehabilitation. We advise that you persevere with the stretching programme ******

The exercise programme offered to you is considered “Gold Standard” for the treatment of AT. However, it is believed that around 10% of patients with AT will not respond to this course of treatment.

After 8 weeks of performing the eccentric exercises at home, the podiatrist will ask you to return for a review appointment. At this appointment another thorough examination will be carried out and compared to the initial examination. The podiatrist will then either prescribe another course of exercises for you to perform for another 8 weeks, or review another treatment plan option.

After 16 weeks, if there has been no improvement and the exercises have been meticulously carried out, the podiatrist may write a letter to the GP requesting some imaging.

If you have any further questions regarding Achilles Tendinopathy please do not hesitate to contact us, or you can make an appointment with one of our podiatrists.

Any further questions?

Please feel free to contact us....

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