



## ACHILLES TENDONITIS

### What is Achilles tendonitis?

This is inflammation of part of the Achilles tendon. It can occur at different locations within the tendon, but the most common is at the ankle level in the tendon. It can also occur at the back of the heel where the tendon inserts. It typically involves pain and swelling in the Achilles area.

### How did I get it?

It can be an overuse injury in some people that actively exercises rigorously. Or, more commonly, it can be age related changes in the tendon that causes an inflammatory response. It is not related to weight.

### What can I do to treat it?

Certainly an anti-inflammatory (like Advil or Aleve) is a reasonable option, although many people cannot tolerate these for extended periods and these are not very successful in curing it, just for pain relief. Physical therapy can be helpful. There are at least 2 studies that show that a specific exercise program (see second page) work nicely over 6 weeks. The mainstay of treatment is a lift placed on the outside of the shoe to elevate the heel, taking some of the pull off of the Achilles. The lifts must remain in the everyday shoe for 6-12 months. Putting something inside ones shoe is often inadequate. If these things were not successful, casting has up to an 80% yield of success. The cast is worn for six weeks and the patient can walk on it. Surgery is a last resort and is rarely indicated.

### Won't a cortisone shot help this?

The answer is yes. But we never inject the Achilles tendon for fear of rupture of the tendon. The only exception to this is the person who has inflammation of the bursa (or fluid sac) in front of the tendon. This bursa can be injected safely with minimal risk to the tendon.

### Will I ever get it again?

If it is an overuse symptom, it is possible to get it again. But, if it is the more common age-related changes in the tendon, it rarely returns once it has gone through the healing process.

## HEEL LIFT

Go to shoe repair store with all of your regular shoes you wear (this should be worn full time). Tell them to add  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch lift to the heel of you shoe. The heel should be inserted into the actual heel of your shoe (NOT ON THE INSIDE). This costs about \$40 per pair. This can be done to dress shoes or athletic shoes, really almost any shoe. Recommend H&H Shoe Repair in Cameron Village (518 Daniels Street, 828-2988). If you have trouble, Biotech orthotists can modify even fancy athletic shoes (789-8222).

## EXERCISES FOR ACHILLES TENDONITIS

To treat Achilles tendonitis, do Achilles stretching, add 3/4 inch heel lift to shoes, and do the following exercise program.



1. With your weight on the good foot (left side in pictures), go up onto your tiptoes.

2. Transfer your weight onto the painful side while still on tiptoe.



3. Slowly lower yourself to flat footed with all your weight on the painful side. Repeat 15 times (you may have to work up to this) two to three times per day.