

Achilles Tendon Injuries



Overview

The Achilles tendons are thick and powerful bands of fibrous tissue. They connect your calf muscles to your heel bones. The tendons help you walk, run and jump. And that means they are under a lot of stress, making injuries to the Achilles tendons common.

Overuse Injuries

You can injure an Achilles tendon because of overuse. That can happen if you walk or run for exercise. It can be a problem for basketball players and for other athletes who jump a lot. A tendon injured from overuse is swollen and painful. We call this "tendinitis." And if it's not cared for properly, it can turn into a chronic problem. It can lead to a condition we call "tendinosis." That's a breakdown of the tendon tissue that gets worse over time.

Rupture

Another common injury is a tendon tear. That happens when you stretch an Achilles tendon too far. A quick, extreme leg movement (like if you suddenly break into a run, or if you trip or stumble) may tear a tendon. It happens to people who play sports that require a lot of running with stops and sharp turns. If you tear your tendon completely, you may hear a pop when it happens. You may feel like you got hit in the back of the ankle. A tear can be very painful, and it can make it hard for you to walk.

Treatment

If you have injured an Achilles tendon, it's important to get proper care so you don't have ongoing problems. Some injuries can be treated with rest, medications, orthotics and physical therapy. If you have torn your tendon, you may benefit from a walking boot or a cast. Or, your tendon can be repaired with surgery. Your healthcare provider can create a plan that's right for you.