



FootScope

A foot health message from
Bayswater Allied Health

Tendonitis



Tendonitis is swelling of the tendons. In the feet, the most common form of tendonitis affects the Achilles tendon, which connects the calf muscles to the heel bone. Tendonitis can be very painful and the tendon will often feel stiff and weak.

CAUSES

Overuse: the main cause of tendonitis is overuse as the tendon is worked hard and suffers lots of tiny injuries that build up over time, making tendonitis common in people who do a lot of exercise and in the elderly, whose tendons are weaker and worn down over time.

Unsupportive shoes: exercising in shoes without shock absorption and built-in support, or shoes that don't fit properly is a common cause of tendonitis as the tendons have to work harder to support rapid movement, stretching and contracting during exercise.

Poor technique: an unstable running style or poor dance technique can put extra stress on the tendons and cause them to become swollen and sore.

Surfaces: running on concrete or dancing on wooden floors can lead to problems due to the lack of shock absorption in the surface you are training on.

TREATMENT

Rest: avoid high impact activities that cause tendon pain, take it easy and allow the tendon time to repair. Continuing to use the tendon can cause the tendon to tear, which is incredibly painful, debilitating and surgery will usually be needed to repair the tendon. The Achilles tendon in particular can take longer to heal than other parts of the body suffering from tendonitis as the Achilles has a limited blood supply, meaning it will take longer for the tendon to get the nutrients it needs for recovery. Start movement again gradually as soon as you are able to apply pressure to the area without pain.

Ice: ice the injured area for about 15 minutes after physical activity to reduce pain and swelling. Icing the area can help to improve recovery time.

Compression: use a compression brace to support the tendon when you are walking around. This will reduce swelling and support the ankle so the tendon can't move around too easily.

Elevation: to reduce swelling, sit with the foot rested on a chair.

Stretch: your podiatrist can give you stretching exercises that will help to ease the injured tendon. Sometimes injury will occur when the tendon is contracted and hasn't been properly stretched before training, stretching can help to relax the tendon.

Correct poor technique when unstable movement is causing tendonitis.

TENDONITIS: 5 TIPS FOR PREVENTION AND RECOVERY

Most cases of tendonitis resolve within three to six months when following a treatment plan. Although recovery is long, symptoms will only persist for a far longer period if left untreated. There are steps that you can take to help the recovery process:

- 1. Stretch:** always warm up before sport and exercise. Properly stretching and allowing tendons to warm up and prepare for movement will help to reduce injury.
- 2. Strengthening exercises:** your podiatrist can recommend exercises to strengthen the tendons in your feet. Stronger tendons mean less chance of injury as they can cope better with the stress being placed on them, regardless of whether stress is caused by heavy exercise or a low-impact walk.
- 3. Shoes:** casual shoes and fashion shoes can have terrible effects on the feet, usually because they don't provide enough support or padding. A comfortable heel pad and shoes that provide support around the ankle help to stabilise the foot during motion and reduce the amount of stress placed on the tendons to maintain stability.
- 4. Orthotics:** for extra support, prescription orthotics and heel pads can be useful to stabilise the foot and take the pressure off the tendons. Orthotics can be beneficial to reduce pain and to improve recovery time.
- 5. Avoid hard surfaces:** try to break up training sessions to perform on different surfaces that may be more forgiving on tendons. Runners may find that running on a specially designed track will be less painful than running on concrete, for example.



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