



Achilles Tendonitis

What is it?

The achilles tendon is the large tendon located in the back of the leg that inserts into the heel. Achilles tendonitis is an inflammation of that tendon. Achilles tendonitis can develop gradually without a history of trauma or can occur from a sudden injury.

Individuals who suffer from achilles tendonitis often complain that their first steps out of bed in the morning are extremely painful. Another common complaint is pain after steps are taken after long periods of sitting. This pain often lessens with activity.

Achilles tendonitis is aggravated by activities that repeatedly stress the tendon, causing inflammation (such as walking, running or jumping). It is a common problem often experienced by athletes, particularly distance runners. Achilles tendonitis can be a difficult injury to treat due to high levels of activity and reluctance to stop or slow down training.

What causes it?

There are several factors that can cause achilles tendonitis. The most common causes are training too hard/too soon without proper strengthening, biomechanical abnormality such as over-pronation, a high-arch foot type, improper shoes and abnormal stiffness of the calf muscle complex.

How can a pedorthist help to treat it?

A person suffering from Achilles tendonitis should incorporate a thorough stretching program to properly warm-up the calf muscles. They should also decrease the distance and intensity of their walk or run, as well as apply ice after the activity. It is best to avoid any up hill climbs, which increases the stress on the Achilles tendon.

An orthotic device should be used to accommodate any biomechanical abnormality and allow the Achilles tendon to function more normally.

A heel lift may be recommended on a temporary basis to elevate the heel and reduce stress on the Achilles tendon. The device should be made with shock absorbing materials.

Shoes that do not place unusual pressure on the Achilles tendon or on its insertion site on the heel will help prevent further injury.

Back View of Foot & Calf Muscles

