

Training Tip #22

Achilles Tendonitis

The Achilles tendon is a band of tissue that connects the heel bone to the calf muscle of the leg. Injury to the tendon may cause it to become inflamed or torn. Tendonitis is the term used when the tendon is inflamed. It can be caused by overuse of the Achilles tendon, tight calf muscles, tight Achilles tendon, uphill walking, overpronation (a problem where your feet roll inward and flatten out more than normal when you walk), or wearing high heels at work and then switching to lower heeled shoes for exercise.

Symptoms of Achilles tendonitis are pain and swelling over the tendon. It may be worse when you rise up on your toes or first thing in the morning. Achilles tendonitis that is not treated can lead to inability to walk and even tendon rupture. Treatment includes putting ice packs on the tendon for 15 minutes 3 times a day, taking anti-inflammatory medication and putting a heel lift insert in your shoe until the pain decreases. This is the one time where you can say that your doctor recommended that you wear high heels. Stretching the Achilles tendon is key to improvement and decreased recurrence.

Towel stretch: Sit on a hard surface with your injured leg stretched out in front of you. Loop a towel around the ball of your foot and pull the towel toward your body keeping your knee straight. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat several times a day.

Standing calf stretch: Facing a wall, keep the injured leg back and the uninjured leg forward. Keep the heel of your injured leg on the floor as you slowly lean into the wall until you feel a stretch in the back of your calf. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat several times a day.

Plantar fascia stretch: Standing with the ball of your injured foot on a stair, reach for the bottom of the step with your heel. Hold for 10 seconds, relax and then repeat.