

North Perth

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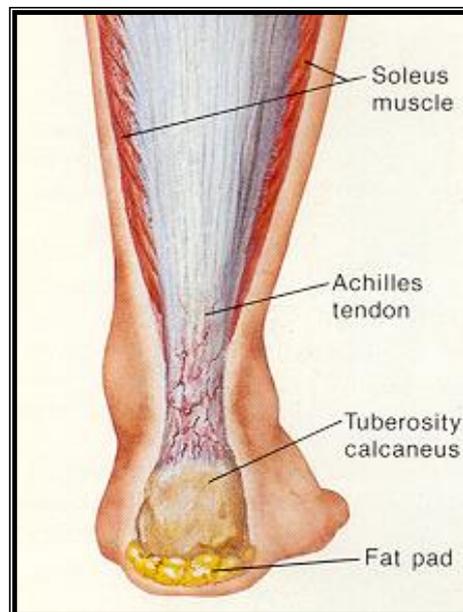
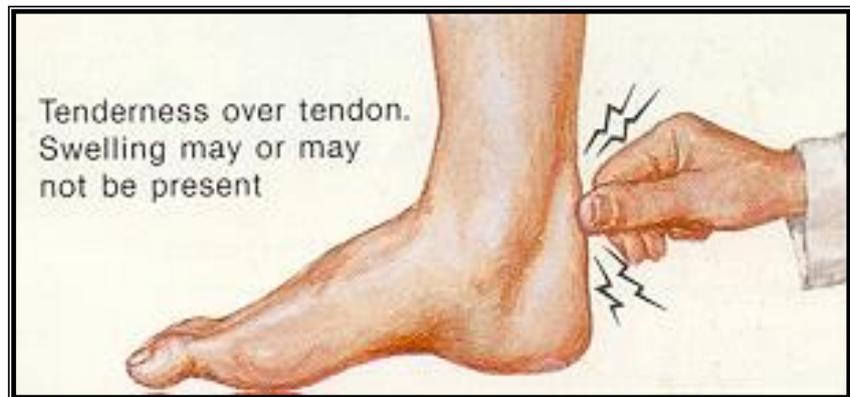
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Back of Heel Pain - Achilles

Definition

Achilles Tendinitis is an inflammation of the large tendon in the back of the lower leg known as the "Achilles tendon". There are cases without the usual process of inflammation and this is termed tendonosis or tendonopathy. The inflammation and pain is associated with physical activity and overuse. In some instances the pulling of the Achilles tendon can result in spurring or calcification of the tendon at the site of insertion at the back of the heel. This may be associated directly with the Achilles tendonitis/tendonosis or appear as an isolated entity. The thin lining of the tendon called the paratenon may become inflamed being a similar in symptoms.



Incidence

Achilles tendinitis/tendonosis can occur at any age and is common in active individuals, particularly those involving running or jumping. However as one gets older, the achilles loses some of its resilience, with more tendency to the condition. As one ages the tendon becomes more like a "brittle rope" rather than a thick strong "elastic band".

Poor circulation to the Achilles tendon contributes to the tendinitis/tendonosis being a chronic condition. In some cases rupture of the tendon may occur.

The Tendon lining can also be involved in the pathology.



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Symptoms

The following symptoms are often associated with Achilles tendinitis:

- Pain may be immediate in onset or may begin gradually and worsen with activity
- Swelling may be localised or diffuse
- Pain when pressing along the tendon course or specific site
- Pain at the back of the heel
- Limping to avoid weight bearing
- Crepitus or creaking with movement along the tendon

Causes

- Physiological changes to the tendon tissue with age
- Overuse, ("too much - too soon")
- Biomechanical abnormalities of the foot and leg including flat feet, tight leg muscles, high arched feet all causing bowing or overload of the tendon
- Poor or inappropriate training regime or surfaces
- Inappropriate footwear
- Direct trauma
- Other: Various arthritic conditions, nutritional, hormonal or metabolic abnormalities may affect the health of the tendon

Treatment

- Rest
- Anti-inflammatory and/or analgesic medication
- Physical therapies: ice, heat, massage, electrotherapeutic modalities (ultrasound, TENS, myofascial therapy techniques)
- Gentle calf stretching
- Heel raise – short term
- Prevention:
 - Address any biomechanical abnormalities
 - Warm up before and after exercise
 - Address the cause eg. Footwear, training regime
- Injection therapy or surgical intervention may be required in some instances