

Patient information

Achilles Tendinopathy

Barts Health Physiotherapy Website:

www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/physiotherapy



What has happened to my tendon?

Achilles Tendinopathy is a condition that causes pain in the heel area. The Achilles tendon is the main tendon on the back of the heel. Achilles Tendinopathy can happen when the tendon has been overworked (overloaded), or underworked (underloaded). It can happen in people that are very active or those that are less active (sedentary).

Pain is usually located either at the back of the heel, or just above the heel in the tendon. There are many theories as to why the tendon is painful. We know that complex changes to the cells in the tendon can happen, as well as growth of blood vessels inside the tendon. These factors can cause the quality of the tendon to reduce and cause pain.

Common Symptoms

- Pain at the back of the heel or in the middle of the tendon
- Pain when you set off to walking or run. This pain can then start to wear off. The pain then may return once you stop moving, or can then be worse the next day. It is also common to get pain on getting out of bed, taking the first few steps.
- Physical changes in the tendon itself
 - Thickening/swelling
 - Uneven lumps or bumps

What can I do to help my tendon recover?

Working (Loading) the tendon through exercise is important. It can take many months of regular exercise for your pain to improve.

The exercises are likely to cause a small degree of muscle and tendon pain, this is normal but intense pain should be avoided. The exercises you should do will differ depending on where your pain is (on the heel or at the tendon), see below descriptions.

Tendon Strengthening

Exercises for pain in the middle of the Achilles tendon

1.

a. Stand with your toes on the edge of a step.



b. Lift the good leg in the air, feeling the tendon loading on the bad leg.



c. Hold for 5 seconds, then return the good foot to the step



2. Do steps a, b and c but now with a slightly BENT knee.

When you can comfortably do the above stages without too much pain, move on to these exercises

1.

a. Stand with your toes on the edge of a step. Use support if needed. Push up so both heels are up in the air (starting position)



b. Lift the good leg in the air so all your weight is going through your painful side. Hold for 2 seconds.



c. **S**
lowly lower your heel down towards the floor. This should take about 6 seconds.

d. **Put**
the good leg back on the step.



Repeat this process 10 times.

Rest for one minute then do

another 2 sets

2. Do steps a, b and c but now with a slightly BENT knee.

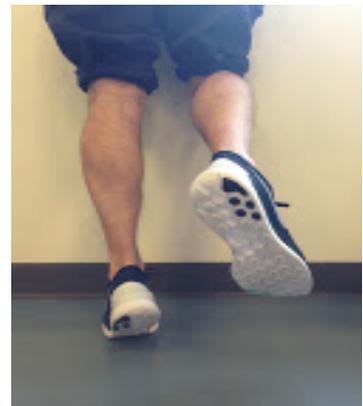
Exercises for pain on your heel (at the very) bottom of
your Achilles tendon

1.

a. Stand next to a wall. Push up so both heels are up in the air (starting position).



b. Lift the good leg in the air. Hold this position for 5 seconds. Return to start position. Repeat 10 times. Rest for 1 minute, then do another 2 sets.



2. Do steps a, b and c but now with a slightly BENT knee.

When you can comfortably do the above stages without too much pain, move on to these exercises

1.

- a. Stand next to a wall. Push up so both heels are up in the air (starting position).



- b. Lift the good leg in the air.



- c. Slowly lower your affected leg to the floor. Repeat 10 times. Rest for 1 minute, then do another 2 sets.



2. Do steps a, b and c but now with a slightly BENT knee.

You can slowly increase the number you do if it does not increase your tendon pain.

Progressions

As the pain gets better, you will need to make the exercise harder. This will help you to continue to make the tendon stronger, and hopefully, further reduce your pain. Try:

- Wearing a heavy bag (e.g. rucksack) on your back
- Increase the number of exercises you do

Walking

Wear comfortable trainers when walking.

If the pain is severe when you walk, a small heel cushion / raise can be placed in the heel of the shoe. This can help take the pressure off the tendon while walking. These are available from most pharmacies or sports shops. Ask your physiotherapist about this

What if my Symptoms do not improve?

If your pain does not improve with the exercises or your pain increases, please speak to your GP.

Other Information

Information on a clinical trial run by Barts Health Trust and Queen Mary University London on Achilles tendinopathy can be found on:

<http://www.tendon.qmul.ac.uk/patients/treatments/index.html>

This includes further information on Achilles tendinopathy and also has videos with exercises progressions available to view.

For info, email: Achilles@Bartshealth.nhs.uk

Contact Information for Barts Health Therapies Department

The Royal London Hospital
Telephone No: 0207 377 7872
Email: TherapiesRLH@bartshealth.nhs.uk

Mile End Hospital
Telephone No: 0208 223 8274
Email: TherapiesMEH@bartshealth.nhs.uk

Docklands Medical Centre
Telephone No: 0203 222 4028
Email: btl-tr.BHMSKTherapiesDMC@nhs.net

Whipps Cross University Hospital
Telephone: 0208 535 6671 (Wanstead site: 0208 989 2368, Chingford site: 0208 524 3071)
Email: wxphysio.outpatients@bartshealth.nhs.uk

Newham University Hospital
Telephone No: 0207 363 8141
Email: TherapyOutpatients.Newham@bartshealth.nhs.uk

For patient information leaflets on other conditions please visit:
www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/physiotherapy

Patient Advice and Liaison Service

Please contact us if you need general information or advice about Trust services.

www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/pals

Large print and other languages

For this leaflet in large print, please speak to your clinical team.

For help interpreting this leaflet in other languages, please ring 020 8223 8934.

Tell us what you think

Tweet us **@NHSBartsHealth**

Talk to us via **www.facebook.com/bartshealth**

Leave feedback on NHS Choices www.nhs.uk

Reference: BH/PIN/548

Publication date: Jan 2017

All our patient information leaflets are reviewed every three years.

