

Achilles tendinopathy

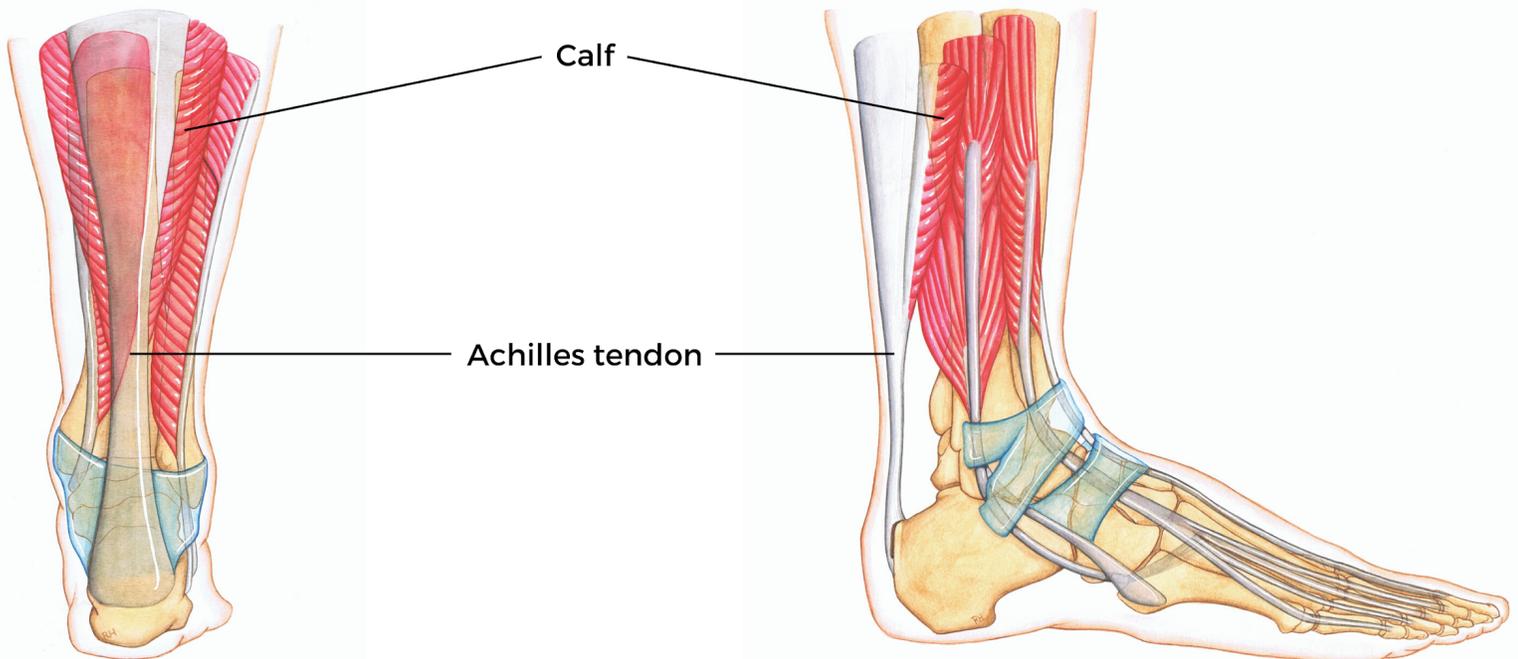
Achilles tendinopathy is a lesion that happens generally after repetitive and excessive stress placed on the Achilles tendon.

When walking, but especially when running, this tendon stores and releases energy to allow for propulsion to happen. People performing activities or sports where jumping, running and/or sprinting is involved are more prone to be affected.

As a rule of thumb, this injury happens when training intensity and/or volume is increased too quickly with inadequate recovery. Starting a new activity, modifying training surface and quickly transitioning to a new type of inadequate training shoes are among the risk factors.

Structures involved

The **Achilles tendon** is the main culprit in this condition. This tendon is the largest and strongest in the human body and is the link between your **calf** muscles and their insertion on the heel. The tendinopathy can occur at the musculotendinous junction where the muscle meets the tendon, in the body of the tendon or at the tendon attachment point on the heel.



Signs & Symptoms that you may experience

Everyone will react differently after an injury and recovery will depend on the severity. Achilles tendinopathy can cause but is not limited to, pain along your Achilles tendon that worsens with exercise, stiffness and sensitivity in the morning, difficulty in weight-bearing activities and localized swelling.

Recovery

Your rehabilitation plan, your health status, your fitness level and nutrition affect recovery time. Generally, you can expect to get back to performing your activities pain-free within 12 weeks when treatment begins quickly after the first signs of injury. However, recovery can take longer in chronic cases where the pain has been present for months or years.

► WHAT TO DO

Early-stage

Relative rest is a good way to protect your Achilles tendon against further damage, but it is important to avoid overprotecting your injury. Loading the tendon progressively during training or activities of daily living is important to prevent overworking the tendon above its recovery capacity. Cross-training using non-painful cardiovascular exercises, such as biking when the injury was caused by running, is helpful to maintain your fitness level while recovering.

Rehabilitation

Follow your practitioner's advice. It will help you manage the different phases of the recovery process and will increase the likelihood of successful rehabilitation. Your practitioner will assist you during the progressive return to your activities or training and during your rehabilitation program in order to regain your normal range of motion, strength and endurance, balance and functional status.

As per the principles of rehabilitation for tendinopathies, progressive loading of the tendon is the most important element for functional recovery. In the case of an Achilles tendinopathy, a progressive training program over 12 weeks is pretty standard.

► WHAT TO AVOID

Don't rely on passive treatment only. Each phase of the rehabilitation process is important. Patients that are actively involved in their treatment plan tend to recover faster. As soon as you feel better and the pain is well managed in collaboration with your therapist, you should reintroduce light exercises as tolerated.
