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Achilles Tendonitis

What is Achilles Tendinitis?

Simply defined, tendonitis is inflammation of a tendon. Inflammation is the body's natural response to injury or disease, and often causes swelling, pain, or irritation.

Symptoms

- Pain and stiffness along the Achilles tendon in the morning
- Pain along the tendon or back of the heel that worsens with activity
- Severe pain the day after exercising
- Thickening of the tendon
- Bone spur (insertional tendinitis)
- Swelling that is present all the time and gets worse throughout the day with activity

Causes

- The problem results from repetitive stress to the tendon. This often happens when we push our bodies to do too much, too soon, but other factors can make it more likely to develop tendinitis, including:
 - Sudden increase in the amount or intensity of exercise activity
 - Tight calf muscles—Having tight calf muscles and suddenly starting an aggressive exercise program can put extra stress on the Achilles tendon
 - Bone spur—Extra bone growth where the Achilles tendon attaches to the heel bone
 - Foot mechanics—Having pronated feet or high arch feet

Treatment

- **Supportive shoes and orthotics.** Pain from insertional Achilles tendinitis is often helped by certain shoes, as well as orthotic devices. Orthotics can help by correcting foot and ankle misalignments and placing the tendon in more of a neutral position to take extra stress and tensions away.
- **Heel lifts.** They also take some strain off the tendon. Like a heel lift, a silicone Achilles sleeve can reduce irritation from the back of a shoe.
- **Stretch and strengthening of the calves**
- **Rest.** The first step in reducing pain is to decrease or even stop the activities that make the pain worse.
- **Ice.** Placing ice on the most painful area of the Achilles tendon is helpful and can be done as needed throughout the day.
- **Cortisone injections.** Cortisone, a type of steroid, is a powerful anti-inflammatory medication. Cortisone injections into the Achilles tendon are rarely recommended because they can cause the tendon to rupture (tear).

Practitioner's Notes:

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