

Achilles Tendinitis



Achilles Tendinitis is a common condition that can affect both recreational and highly competitive athletes. This is especially true for pickleball players due to the constant moving/running and just in general “being on your toes”. The Achilles Tendon connects our calf muscles (gastrocnemius, soleus) to our heel (calcaneus). If the Achilles Tendon is not properly conditioned for the additional stress and strain of playing pickleball then inflammation, pain can develop with a worst case scenario of a ruptured tendon requiring surgical repair.

Symptoms: Pain, inflammation to the Achilles Tendon region. This area may appear swollen/puffy and feel warm to the touch. Pain may be reproduced when palpating the tendon or heel and when walking, attempting to rise up on toes or running. Your calf and/or ankle may also feel tight.

Causes: Tightness to the calf muscles is a common cause along with flat foot/arch lacking appropriate support and foot wear. Sudden bursts of activity involving the foot, such as running, jumping, can lead to injury especially for those that do not play on a regular basis or are just beginning playing. Trigger points in the calf muscles can also be a cause as they do not allow the muscles to contract and relax properly. Tendons can become weaker with age and this can be a contributing factor if not conditioned.

Self-Care: Although I know it is hard to do, not playing for a period of time while your symptoms subside is recommended. You can perform various calf stretches to relieve tightness, use ice on the tendon region (20 minutes max, multiple times per day) and take over the counter medication such as anti-inflammatories, pain medication if you choose. Make sure you have appropriate arch support and foot wear.

Physical Therapy: Physical Therapy should start with a comprehensive evaluation to determine the cause of your symptoms. Once this is determined, treatment may consist of using LASER, therapeutic ultrasound and/or electrical stimulation to decrease pain, inflammation and promote soft tissue healing. Other treatment may consist of manual therapy techniques,

including soft tissue mobilization, trigger point release and joint mobilizations to improve ankle mobility. Specific stretching, strengthening exercises may also be included along with therapeutic (kinesio) taping and instruction in self-care/home management.

Recovery Time Frame: Many factors can determine recovery time including duration of treatment before receiving treatment, age and other medical conditions. Allowing three to six weeks is a general guideline, but could be more or less depending on the above mentioned factors along with sticking to any treatment plan.

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