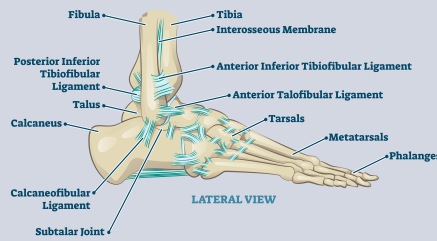


Foot and Ankle Conditions and Treatments



ACHILLES TENDON TEARS

The Achilles tendon is a strong, fibrous band that connects the calf muscle to the heel bone. This structure is important in everyday life and is used when you walk, run, or jump. If the tendon stretches too far, it can tear either partially or completely. An Achilles tendon tear typically occurs from suddenly increasing the intensity of a sport activity, stepping onto an uneven surface, or jumping and landing. Those who participate in “stop and start” activities such as basketball and tennis are more at risk. Also, tears are more prevalent in males, and people between the ages of 30 and 40. Steroid use and taking certain antibiotics called fluoroquinolones, can increase the risk of an Achilles rupture.

Symptoms

- “Pop” or snap in the back of the leg
- Sudden, intense pain in the back of the ankle or below the calf
- Swelling near the heel
- Inability or weakness when trying to stand on your toes

The physician will review your history and symptoms and examine your lower leg and ankle. There may be a gap where the tendon tore if it is completely ruptured. He or she will squeeze the calf to see if your foot can flex. If the foot does not flex, you most likely have an Achilles tendon tear. A MRI can be ordered to determine the extent of injury in cases that a tear is suspected.

Treatment

Treatment for an Achilles tear is based on your age, severity of injury, and overall activity level. Surgical treatment for a complete tear involves making an incision in the back of the leg and repairing the tendon so it heals back together. Depending on tissue quality, the tendon may be reinforced with other tendons. Nonsurgical treatment includes immobilization of the ankle in either a cast or boot, allowing the tendon to heal. Rehabilitation is a very important part of treatment to regain muscle strength and leg function after an Achilles tendon tear.