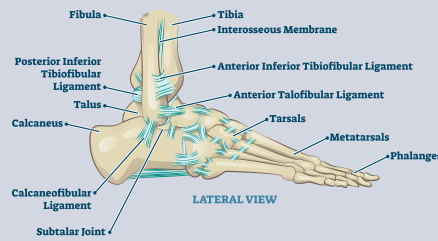


Foot and Ankle Conditions and Treatments



ACHILLES TENDONITIS

The Achilles tendon is a large, thick tendon 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. Achilles tendinitis is a condition characterized by inflammation of the tendon that can cause pain, swelling, and discomfort along the back of the leg near the heel.

This condition typically results from repetitive stress on the tendon. For example, overuse, tight calf muscles, or a sudden increase in activity can contribute to tendinitis. Younger, active individuals tend to have non-insertional tendinitis with symptoms in the mid portion of the tendon. Insertional tendinitis involves the lower portion of the tendon where it attaches to the heel. Often times, bone spurs can develop from injured tendon fibers that harden, or calcify.

After discussing the symptoms you are experiencing, your doctor will examine the foot and ankle. He or she will check for pain and swelling over the tendon, and assess ankle strength and range of motion. X-rays are often ordered to check for any calcifications or heel spurs.

Nonsurgical Treatment

Nonsurgical treatment for Achilles tendinitis is often very effective to relieve pain. The first step is to avoid aggravating activities and reducing high-impact exercises. Icing the tendon and taking anti-inflammatory medication can reduce inflammation and pain. Physical therapy and regular home exercises is very helpful to stretch and strengthen the calf muscles that may be contributing to your tendinitis. Certain shoes and orthotic devices, such as heel lifts, can take strain off the tendon and decrease symptoms as well.

Surgical Treatment

Surgical treatment may be considered if pain continues after six to nine months of conservative treatment. The type of surgery depends on the extent of Achilles tendon involvement and location of tendinitis. The most common surgical procedure is removing the damaged portion of the tendon and any heel spur if present, and then repairing the healthy tendon tissue. Physical therapy is very important during your recovery and may be performed for many weeks following surgery.