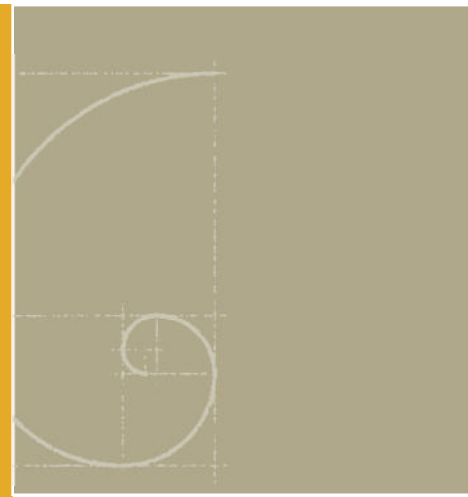


Achilles Tendinitis



What is it?

Achilles tendonitis is simply inflammation of the achilles tendon at the back of the ankle but is the bane of many athletes. It is one of the most common tendon injuries which should always be treated as early as possible. A condition that can be quite debilitating it is usually associated with swelling and pain upon tensioning or squeezing of the achilles tendon.

What causes it?

There are several factors that can contribute to achilles tendonitis, the most common being overuse of the muscle/tendon following initial injury to the tendon. A poorly functioning foot can cause the heel to shift outwards and "bow" the Achilles tendon. This damages the tendon sheath, resulting in painful inflammation of the area. This abnormality must be neutralised to stop recurrence of injury. A sudden increase in training, excessive hill running and speed work can cause tearing of the achilles tendon. Excessive heel cushioning and air-filled shoes can over a period of time lose their stability if worn incorrectly, this causes the heel to continue to sink into the shoe, while the shoe is absorbing shock. This further stretches the Achilles tendon at a time when the leg and body are moving forward over the foot. Tight calf and hamstring muscles may con-

tribute to prolonged achilles tendonitis due to the continual "pulling" strain they exert on the tendon

How is it treated?

Achilles tendonitis is a condition that responds well to conservative treatment if treated early. If disregarded, symptoms and treatment can last for several months. Conservative treatment involves:

- i. · Training modification. Your training schedule will be discussed and modified so that a successful and effective treatment can be administered.
 - ii. · R.I.C.E. Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation. As with any acute injury the RICE principle is paramount. It is necessary in the early stages of treatment to help fight the inflammation. Anti-inflammatory medication may also be required.
 - iii. · Heel raises. To decrease the strain and load on the achilles tendon may be used for a short time.
- Correction of abnormal mechanics. Orthoses are designed to allow the foot to function around its normal position, allowing the Achilles to recover and prevent recurrence of the injury.
 - Stretching and physical therapy. Mild stretching, massage and strengthening exercises are prescribed to restore the extensibility of the tendon, increase strength and hasten full recovery.