



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Aneurin Bevan
University Health Board

Achilles Tendon Injury Advice

You have been diagnosed with an Achilles tendon rupture. This leaflet will provide you with information about your Achilles tendon injury and likely recovery.

What is an Achilles tendon?

The Achilles tendon (AT) is a large rope like band of fibrous tissue in the back of the ankle that attaches your calf muscle to your heel bone. It is very important tendon as it allows a good push off from your foot when you walk and run. It enables you to stand on tiptoe and walk normally.

What is an Achilles tendon rupture?

This is when the tendon is torn, either partly or completely, and it is often very difficult or impossible to go up on your toes on the affected side. When the rupture occurs, it is often described as if you have been hit or kicked in your calf causing sudden pain.

It can occur unexpectedly or during sudden calf muscle activity, such as running or sprinting, and is commonly associated with racquet sports such as badminton, squash and running activities. Sometimes the tendon becomes chronically weakened and can give way during simple activities such as walking.

How is an Achilles tendon injury managed?

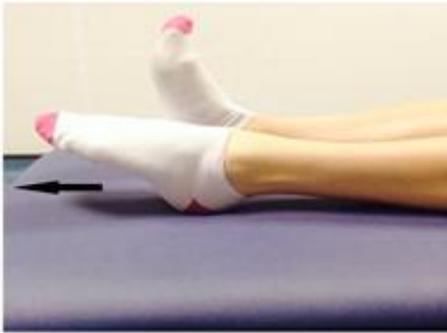
Injuries in this area often heal on their own, so your injury will initially be managed conservatively, (meaning you do not require surgery at this time) allowing the tendon to heal naturally, whilst not weight-bearing and resting your foot in a boot. You will have been treated with a boot with 3 wedges in the bottom, which you **must wear at all times - even in bed.**

We also recommend choosing a supportive shoe or trainer with a firm sole for your uninjured foot. You will notice that the boot you have been given has a thicker sole, by matching this height on the uninjured side you will reduce any stress on your other joints.

You will have been advised that Trauma and Orthopaedics will arrange an appointment for an Ultrasound scan and for your follow up. Because your foot will need to be immobilised in a boot for an extended period of time (4-5 weeks), this places you at higher risk for developing a Deep Vein

Thrombosis (blood clot) which could potentially have very serious effects. You will have been assessed for this and may be given daily blood thinning injections, which you will have been shown how to do before leaving the hospital.

Can I shower/ wash my foot?



You may take the boot off to carefully wash/shower and change your sock once a day.

Whilst doing this **you must keep your toes pointed down**, as demonstrated in the picture, otherwise, you will delay healing of the tendon

Things you should do:	Things you shouldn't do:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear your boot at all times – even in bed • Wear a sock as this will help absorb any moisture inside your boot. • Take pain relief – see advice page 3 - which can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local shops. • Keep your leg raised (elevated) with your foot higher than your bottom to help prevent/reduce any swelling. • Put something under your mattress or the end of the bed so that your foot is raised at night. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put weight on your foot • Remove the boot except for showering or washing your foot/changing your sock • Don't attempt to drive, or ride a motorcycle or bicycle, • Smoke. We know that smoking slows down the healing of Achilles tendon ruptures. If you would like help to give up, please contact Help Me Quit on Freephone 0800 0852219

How long does it take to recover from a ruptured Achilles tendon?

As the blood supply to the area is poor, the healing process is slower and it takes a long time to recover - it can take 12 to 24 months depending on your previous level of activities. You will also need physiotherapy.

When can I drive again?

You will need to discuss this at your follow up with the Trauma and Orthopaedic clinician

Work and returning to sport

Your return to work will depend on your job – remember you must be non-weightbearing on your injured leg until advised otherwise. Please discuss this with the clinician in Fracture Clinic.

You should be given an appointment shortly but you can self-certify for the first 7 days. You will need to speak to your employer about whether they need a completed form (they may have their own) or notification in some other way.

Your return to sport will depend on your sport and level you play at – again please discuss this with the clinician in Trauma and Orthopaedics.

What should I take for Pain?

No pain relief may be needed, but painkillers, such as **Paracetamol**, are useful to ease pain, but it is best to take them regularly for a few days or so rather than every now and then.

They can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local shops. Make sure you don't take any other product containing Paracetamol.

Anti-inflammatory painkillers (like Ibuprofen) can also be used. These relieve pain and may also limit inflammation and swelling, however if you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant you shouldn't use them. Side effects sometimes occur with anti-inflammatory painkillers - stomach pain and bleeding from the stomach, are the most serious. Some people with asthma, high blood pressure, kidney failure or heart failure may not be able to take them either.

With all medication it is essential that you follow the instructions on the packet or bottle carefully.

What exercises do I need to do?

You need to keep your leg muscles strong whilst you are not using it as you normally would, so do the exercises (below and on the next page) 3-4 times every day

	<p>Knee extension (seated)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With both feet on the ground, lift and straighten your boot wearing leg as far as is comfortable • Hold this position for 5 seconds before returning your leg to the floor • Repeat 5 times
---	---

 <p>Leg raises - standing</p>	<p>It's important to keep upright throughout these exercises.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold onto a chair or table for support. • Keep your knee straight and lift the boot wearing leg back as far as is comfortable. • Return your foot to the floor • Repeat 5 times • Then lift out to the side • Return your foot to the floor • Repeat 5 times 	 <p>Side leg raises</p>
--	--	---

	<p>Knee Bends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand up and hold on to a surface such as kitchen work top or back of sofa. • Keep your knees level and lift the foot on your boot wearing leg up towards your bottom. • Return your foot to the floor • Repeat 5 times
---	---

If you develop increased pain in the leg / swelling of the leg or chest discomfort / shortness of breath, go to the Emergency Department at the Grange University Hospital. Please do not go to a Minor injury unit as they will not be able to help you.

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg