

The Achilles Tendon

Injuries to the Achilles tendon increase as athletes get older. The two most common injuries of the Achilles tendon are Achilles Tendinopathy, and tearing or rupturing of the tendon. Other less common injuries include Peritendinitis and Retrocalcaneal Bursitis.

Achilles Tendinopathy can be due to one or a number of causes which may result in excessive loading on the Achilles, including:

- A **sudden increase** in the intensity, frequency and duration of activity.
- A **decrease in recovery** time between activity.
- Wearing **inadequate** or incorrect footwear.
- **Excessive** pronation (force on achilles tendon increases).
- Running on hard or uneven surfaces.
- Change of surface (seasonal).
- **Poor muscle flexibility** (e.g. tight calf muscles, weak calf muscles).
- **Decreased** joint range of motion (e.g. stiff ankle joint).
- **Inadequate** warm up, stretching and cool down.

An Achilles tendon rupture is a complete or partial tear that occurs when the tendon is stretched beyond its capacity. Forceful jumping or pivoting, or sudden accelerations of running, can overstretch the tendon and cause a tear. An injury to the tendon can also result from falling or tripping.

Achilles tendon ruptures are most often seen in 'weekend warriors' – typically, middle-aged people participating in sports in their spare time. Less commonly, illness or medications, such as steroids or certain antibiotics, may weaken the tendon and contribute to ruptures.

Tips for preventing Achilles tendon injuries:

- Wearing **appropriate** shoes for the activity.
- Using **correct technique** to limit excessive stress on the Achilles tendon.
- Warming up, stretching and cooling down.
- Undertaking training **prior** to competition to ensure readiness to play.
- Participating in **regular** strengthening and stretching sessions to maintain muscle strength and flexibility.
- **Gradually increasing** the intensity and duration of training.
- Allowing **adequate recovery** time between workouts or training sessions.
- Strapping and taping the ankle to assist in creating a more **secure structure**.
- **Avoiding** activities that cause pain. If **pain** does occur, discontinue the activity immediately and commence RICER (Rest-Ice-Compression-Elevation-Referral)

