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Achilles Tendonitis

Achilles tendinitis is a painful and often debilitating inflammation of the Achilles tendon. This is the largest and strongest tendon in the body, located in the back of the lower leg, which attaches to the heel bone, and connects the leg muscles to the foot. The Achilles tendon gives us the ability to rise up on our toes, facilitating the act of walking, and Achilles tendinitis can make walking almost impossible. The three major stages of Achilles tendon inflammation are: peritonitis, tendinitis and peritonitis with tendinitis. Peritonitis symptoms are characterized by localized pain during or following activity. As this condition progresses, pain often develops earlier on during activity, with de-creased activity, or while at rest. Tendinitis is a degeneration condition that usually does not produce symptoms. It may cause swelling or a hard knot of tissue (nodule) on the back of the leg. Peritonitis with tendinitis results in pain and swelling with activity. As this condition progresses, partial or complete tendon rupture may occur. The overall incidence of Achilles tendinitis is unknown. The condition occurs in approximately 6-18% of runners, and also is more common in athletes, especially in sports that involve jumping, and in people who do a lot of walking. Achilles tendinitis that occurs as a result of arthritis in the heel is more common in people who are middle aged and older. Achilles tendinitis often develops following sudden changes in activity level, training on poor surfaces, or wearing inappropriate footwear. Symptoms may be attributed to a single incident of over stressing the tendon, or it may result from a series of stresses that produce small tears over time (overuse). The condition also may develop in people who exercise infrequently and in those who are just beginning an exercise program, little flexibility and inactivity. Women who wear high-heeled shoes often and switch to sneakers for exercise also can develop Achilles tendinitis. The Achilles tendon and lower leg muscles gradually adapt to a shortened position because the shoes prevent the heel from stretching all the way to the ground.