



WHAT IS ACHILLES TENDINOSIS OR A RUPTURED ACHILLES TENDON?

The Achilles tendon is a large structure which originates from the calf muscle at the back of your lower leg and inserts into the heel bone. Injury to the Achilles tendon can occur for many reasons including:

- Overuse (such as a sudden increase in training)
- Incorrect biomechanics or altered alignment (due to tight or weak leg muscles or the way the foot is positioned)
- Inadequate footwear (including not enough support during activity)
- An accident (laceration to the tendon itself).

Achilles tendinosis is usually of gradual onset and results after the tendon is subjected to numerous minute tears which don't heal fully causing the tendon to thicken and weaken. An Achilles tendon can partially or fully rupture following being overstretched. It commonly occurs with explosive acceleration and most often the tendon tears just above the heel bone.

WHAT SYMPTOMS MAY I EXPERIENCE?

Tendinosis

- Pain (stiffness/aching/tenderness) in the tendon particularly first thing in the morning or after a period of rest
- Improves slightly with initial activity then worsening with increased exercise
- Tenderness with pinching the sides of the tendon

Rupture

- Instant snap or pop heard
- Immediate pain felt at the back of your ankle
- Impossible to walk
- Swelling around the heel
- Unable to rise onto your toes

HOW CAN PHYSIOTHERAPY ASSIST?

Tendinosis

- Soft tissue massage and/or frictioning to promote healing and optimal alignment of the tendon fibres
- Stretching and exercises to progressively lengthen/strengthen muscles
- Education regarding correct biomechanics while walking/running

Rupture

- Surgery or managed conservatively and immobilization for 6-8wks
- Rehab programme involving:
 - soft tissue massage
 - strengthening exercises
 - progress to sport-specific drills