

Achilles Tendinopathy

INFORMATION

A common condition that could be due to intrasubstance changes in the Achilles tendon (tendinosis) or thickening of the tendon sheath (paratendon).

FEATURES

- Pain at the back of the calf and heel, usually activity related.
- Thickening of the tendon.
- If the tender area remains constant when the ankle is moved through dorsi and plantar flexion, it is 'paratendinos'.
- If the tender area moves with movement of the tendon it is tendinosis.

EVIDENCE

- Conservative treatment is successful in up to 65% of mild and moderate tendinosis and up to 60% or paratendinosis.
- Weight reduction and activity moderation are useful.
- Investigations in the form of ultrasound and MRI scan help plan treatment.

INITIAL TREATMENT

- Physiotherapy, to include ultrasound, stretching exercises.
- Orthotics to correct heel varus.
- Activity modification, such as avoidance of impact loading and weight reduction programs.

FURTHER MANAGEMENT

A trial of the above for three months is reasonable, failing which refer to secondary care.

Referral should only be made IF

- Patient understands that referral is likely to be for surgery
- Patient is fit to undergo surgery
- Patient understands that their operation will be carried out within 18 weeks and is able to commit to that timescale