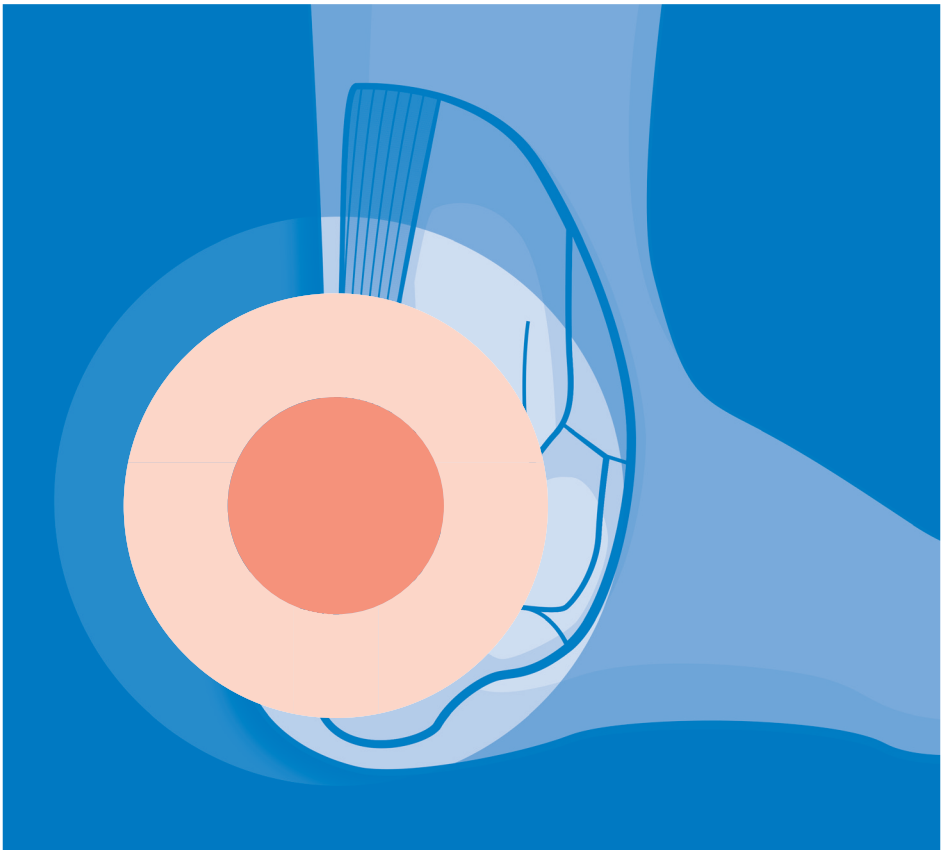


Patient Information

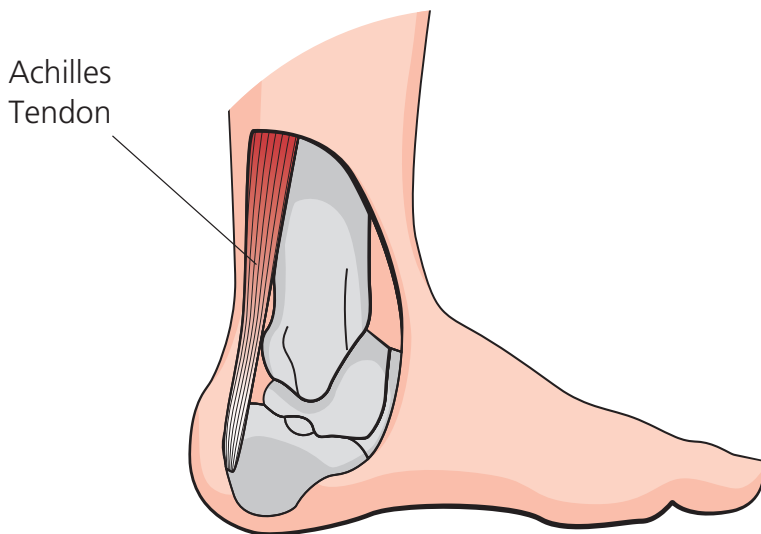
# Achilles Tendon Rupture Non-operative Management



The Achilles tendon is the large tendon at the back of the ankle which connects the calf muscles to the heel bone (see *Figure 1*). When the Achilles tendon is ruptured (torn) the connection between the calf muscles and the heel is lost resulting in loss of movement and strength.

The injury is often seen in sports that require jumping or sprinting, such as football, tennis or basketball. The tendon can also be injured by a fall or deep cut. Patients often report feeling as though they have been hit on the heel and sometimes hear a snap when the Achilles tendon ruptures.

Figure 1.



## Diagnosing an Achilles Tendon Rupture

An Achilles tendon rupture can often be diagnosed by the history of the injury and clinical examination. Your doctor may be able to feel a gap in the tendon if it has ruptured completely.

If the diagnosis is uncertain then a scan is sometimes required to confirm the extent of the injury.

## Non-operative Management Plan

Achilles tendon ruptures can be either treated with an operation or by letting the tendon heal naturally by putting the foot and ankle in a cast or a boot. This is called non-operative management and your Consultant has decided that this is the best option for you. With the correct rehabilitation programme the outcomes have been shown to be very similar for both approaches.

Your ankle and foot will initially be placed in a cast for approximately 4 weeks. You will then have to wear a walker boot for approximately 6 weeks (see *Figure 2*). It is important to wear the boot at all times. You will initially have to use elbow crutches and should not put any weight through the injured leg until you have been told it is safe to do so.

You will be referred to see a physiotherapist who will alter the movement available in your walker boot and provide exercises for you to do at home.

In order to try and help manage the swelling in your foot and ankle following the injury you should keep your leg elevated when resting.



Figure 2

## Important Instructions

- Do not weight-bear until told to do so.
- Wear your walker boot at all times, including in bed at night.
- Follow your Consultants/physiotherapists instructions fully.
- Do not try to progress faster than instructed (even if you are not feeling much pain).
- The risk of the tendon re-rupturing will increase if you do not follow all the instructions given by your Consultant and physiotherapist.

## Initial Exercises With Your Boot On

It is important to maintain the strength in your leg while you are not weight-bearing in the early stages of your rehabilitation. The following exercises should be done while wearing your boot.

**Toe Curls:** Lie with your injured leg elevated. Move your toes up and down. This will help circulation and prevent the joints in your toes becoming stiff.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times every hour.



**Inner range quadriceps:** Sit with your legs straight out in front of you. Place a rolled up towel under your knee on the injured leg and push the knee into the towel. Straighten your leg so that your foot lifts off the bed tightening the thigh muscles.

Hold for \_\_\_\_\_ seconds and repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



**Straight leg raise:** Sit with your legs straight out in front of you. Tighten your thigh muscles. Keep the knee straight and lift the leg 20cm off the bed.

Hold for \_\_\_\_\_ seconds and repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



**Side lying leg lift:** Lie on your non-injured side and bend your bottom knee for stability.

Keep the knee of the top leg straight and lift the top leg upwards. Return the leg to the floor and repeat the exercise.

Hold for \_\_\_\_\_ seconds and repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.



**Top knee turn out:** Lie on your non-injured side with your knees bent to 45degrees. Keep your feet together and lift your top knee as high as you can without your back moving. Keep your lower leg on the floor.

Hold for \_\_\_\_\_ seconds and repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

## **After the Boot is Removed**

Once your boot has been removed you will need to gradually increase your activity to strengthen the Achilles tendon. Your physiotherapist will provide guidance and advice on how to do this safely.

The tendon is at the highest risk of re-rupture in the early stages after the boot has been removed so it is extremely important to follow all guidelines and advice.

Exercises will be given to increase the strength and movement in your lower leg which will help you return to full function.

It can take over 6 months to fully recover from a torn Achilles tendon. This can sometimes be longer and will depend on several factors including your age, fitness levels, and the type of activity you would like to return to.

## **Pain**

It is common to have pain in the Achilles tendon for some time after it has ruptured. You may be given painkillers to take home with you from hospital. A further supply can be obtained from your GP or pharmacist if required.

## **Contacts**

Physiotherapy Department: 01274 365277

Opening times: Monday – Friday 8am – 4.00pm

If you need this information in another format or language, please ask a member of staff to arrange this for you.

## **Next Generation Text**

We use Next Generation Text for people with hearing difficulties.

To contact us ring 18001 365277.

## **Smoking**

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