

## Achilles Tendon Rupture

### WHAT IS THE ACHILLES TENDON?

The Achilles tendon is a fibrous structure that connects the calf muscles (gastrocnemius and soleus) to the heel bone (calcaneus). It aids in activities such as walking, running, jumping, and climbing stairs.

### HOW ARE THEY INJURED?

Most tears of the Achilles are activity related and most common with sports requiring a lot of stop and go, such as tennis, basketball, and soccer. They usually occur in men ages 30-60 during a “push-off” motion.



### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

An Achilles tendon rupture causes sudden, severe calf pain. People often describe it as “getting hit with a baseball bat” or a “gunshot wound.” Sometimes the severe pain resolves quickly, but they continue to have soreness and significant swelling of the calf. Bruising typically develops within a few days.

### DO I NEED SURGERY?

The need for surgery depends on the location of the tear, your individualized limitations/activities, and the time since the injury. All treatment requires prompt initiation for the best outcomes. Surgical repair allows for reattachment of the torn tendon. After surgery, you will be placed in a cast or a non-removable splint, which will likely be transitioned to a removable boot at the first post-op visit. You will be unable to bear weight on the affected leg for around 6 weeks following surgery. Formal physical therapy will be required following surgery for range of motion, strength, and conditioning progression.

Some Achilles tendon tears cannot be surgically repaired or are better treated conservatively. These individuals will be treated in a boot with wedges or casts for 6-8 weeks. Your weight bearing through your leg will be protected during this time. Formal physical therapy will be required for range of motion, strength, and conditioning progression.

### ARE THERE ANY ADVERSE OUTCOMES?

After proper healing time and physical therapy, there is still a risk of re-rupturing the Achilles tendon. Tendons do not have good blood circulation, which decreases the ability for strong healing. There is also concern for proper wound healing following surgery due to the location of the injury. Both surgical and non-surgical treatment involves immobilization and non-weightbearing, which increases the risk of developing a blood clot (deep vein thrombosis -- DVT). Many people will need to be on some kind of blood thinner to try to decrease this risk.