

Achilles Tendon Injury

Home Exercise Program

Treatment of Achilles Strain and Achilles Tendonitis

Treatment for Achilles tendonitis and strain are very similar:



Stretching

1. **Towel Stretch** - Sit on a hard surface with your injured leg stretched out in front of you. Loop a towel around the ball of your foot and pull the towel toward your body. Be sure to keep your knee straight. Hold this position for thirty seconds and repeat three times.



As soon as you can tolerate pressure on the ball of your foot, begin stretching your ankle using the towel stretch. When this stretch is too easy, try the standing calf stretch and the soleus stretch.

2. **Standing Calf Stretch** - Facing a wall, put your hands against the wall at about eye level. Keep the uninjured leg forward and your injured leg back about 12-18 inches behind your uninjured leg. Keep your injured leg straight and your heel on the floor and keep your toes pointed towards the wall. Next, do a slight lunge by bending the knee of the forward leg. Lean into the wall until you feel a stretch in your calf muscle. Hold this position for 30 - 60 seconds and repeat 3 times.





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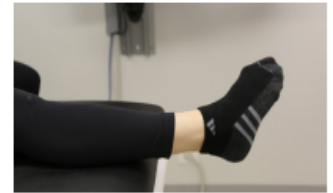
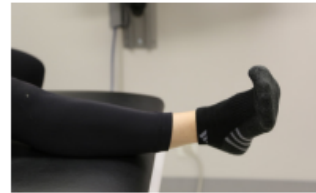
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3. **Half Kneeling Ankle Mobility** - Start by placing the knee of the uninvolved leg down on the floor and the involved leg out in front of your body so you are in a 90 degree lunge. Your knee should be stacked on top of your ankle. Keeping your foot/ heel flat on the floor, slowly shift your hips forward so that your knee moves over your toes deepening your lunge. Hold for 5-10 seconds. Press your hips back to starting position. Repeat for 3 sets of 10 repetitions. Try to press your knee further out over your toes with each repetition.



4. **Ankle Alphabets** - You can do this exercise sitting or lying down. Pretend you are writing each of the letters of the alphabet with your foot. This will move your ankle in all directions. The movement should come from your ankle, not from your hip or knee. Do this twice.



Strengthening

5. **Heel Raises** - While standing on the floor or on a small step balance yourself on both feet and hold onto a wall for balance. Rise up on your toes, hold for five seconds, and then lower yourself back down. Repeat 10 times, and do 3 sets of 10. Once you are comfortable with this, try on one leg. 3 sets of 10.
6. **Resisted Dorsiflexion** - Sitting with your leg out straight and your foot near a door, wrap the tubing around the ball of your foot. Anchor the other end of the tubing to the door by tying a knot in the tubing, slipping it between the door and the frame, and closing the door, or have a friend or family member hold the band for you. Pull your toes toward your face. Return slowly to the starting position. Repeat 10 times, and do 3 sets of 10.





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7. **Resisted Plantar Flexion** - Sitting with your leg outstretched, loop the middle section of the tubing around the ball of your foot. Hold the ends of the tubing in both hands. Gently press the ball of your foot down, and point your toes, stretching the THERA-BAND. Return to the starting position. Repeat 10 times, and do 3 sets of 10.
8. **Resisted Inversion** - Sit with your legs straight out and cross your uninjured leg over your injured ankle. Wrap the tubing around the ball of your injured foot and then loop it around your uninjured foot so that the THERA-BAND is anchored at one end. Hold the other end of the THERA-BAND in your hand. Turn your injured foot inward and upward. This will stretch the tubing. Return to the starting position. Repeat 10 times, and do 3 sets of 10.
9. **Resisted Eversion** - Sitting with both legs out stretched and the tubing looped around both feet, slowly turn your injured foot upward and outward. Hold this position for 5 seconds. Repeat 10 times, and do 3 sets of 10.
10. **Lunges** - Start with your feet in a split stance a comfortable distance apart. Keep your hands on your hips for balance. Slowly bend both knees towards a 90 degree angle. Lower your hips towards the floor while keeping your chest up. Your back knee should hover just above the floor and your front knee should be stacked on top of your ankle. Press into both feet to return to the starting position. Repeat for 3 sets of 10 repetitions on each leg.





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When can I return to my sport or activity?

The goal of rehabilitation is to return you to your sport or activity as soon as is safely possible. If you return too soon, you may worsen your injury, which could lead to permanent damage. Everyone recovers at a different rate.

Returning to your sport or activity will be determined by how soon your ankle recovers, not by how many days or weeks it has been since your injury has occurred. In general, the longer you have symptoms before you start treatment, the longer it will take to get better.

You may safely return to your sport or activity when, starting from the top of the list and progressing to the end, each of the following is true:

- You have full range of motion in the injured ankle, compared to the uninjured ankle
- You have full strength of the injured ankle and hip compared to the uninjured ankle and are able to complete the above exercises without pain
- You can jog straight ahead without pain or limping
- You can sprint straight ahead without pain or limping
- You can jump on both legs without pain, and you can jump on the injured leg without pain

Return to your sport at about 50% effort, and increase by about 10% each week. If you begin with pain, you may need to rest for a few days before returning to activities.