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# Tendinitis of the lower limb

## WHAT IS TENDINITIS?

Any tendon of the foot or lower limb may be the source of symptoms. Tendinitis involves the inflammation and degeneration of the tendon and surrounding structures. Tendinitis may occur in response to overuse, sudden increase in activity or exercise, wearing of inappropriate footwear, malalignment of the lower limb, following trauma and systemic disease.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF TENDINITIS?

Tendinitis takes the form of stiffness and 'start up pain' which initially settles after warming up, but may increase again during prolonged activity. If left untreated, tendinitis pain may become present continuously. Pain maybe elicited when the tendon is contracted against resistance, and when passively stretched.

**Assessment of the damaged tendon and surrounding structures may reveal:**

- Swelling of the tendon and redness of the surrounding skin (often seen in acute cases, but less common in chronic cases)
- Increased localised heat to the damaged structure
- A palpable thickening of the tendon (often present in longstanding tendinitis)
- Palpable pain upon compression of the inflamed area
- Alignment problems of the lower limb
- Pain and reduced strength upon isolated testing of the tendon and secondary impaired function of the lower limb

## HOW CAN TENDINITIS BE TREATED?

Prompt treatment of tendinitis is required to prevent exacerbated symptoms and rupture. Steroid injections are not indicated in treatment of tendinitis, as it may weaken or even rupture the tendon.

### Treatment for tendinitis may involve:

- Rest when severe acute symptoms are present, to aid healing of the structure
- Ice massage to reduce inflammation and act as an analgesic to reduce pain
- Compression therapy to reduce inflammation
- Elevation of the lower limb to reduce inflammation
- The wearing of appropriate footwear, as recommended by your podiatrist
- Stretching exercises
- Strengthening exercises once the pain has subsided
- Anti inflammatory medication
- Massage and mobilisation of the joint of the lower limb
- Strapping and padding
- Prescription of insoles, wedges or orthoses to re-align the lower limb mechanics
- Surgery

