

Exercises for Achilles Tendinopathy

This information leaflet has been produced to provide our patients with an overview of their condition and what treatments they may expect. However, each person is different and the treatment you are offered will depend on your unique circumstances.



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The mainstay of treating atraumatic pain in the Achilles tendon is physical exercises and activity modifications. To that end, stretching the calf muscles and Achilles tendon will help in 70% of patients.

Calf Stretching

Lean forward against a wall with one knee straight and your heel on the ground. Place the other leg in front, with the knee bent.

To stretch the calf muscles and the heel cord, push your hips toward the wall in a controlled fashion. It is important for your feet to be perpendicular to the wall. You should feel a strong pull in the calf during the stretch.

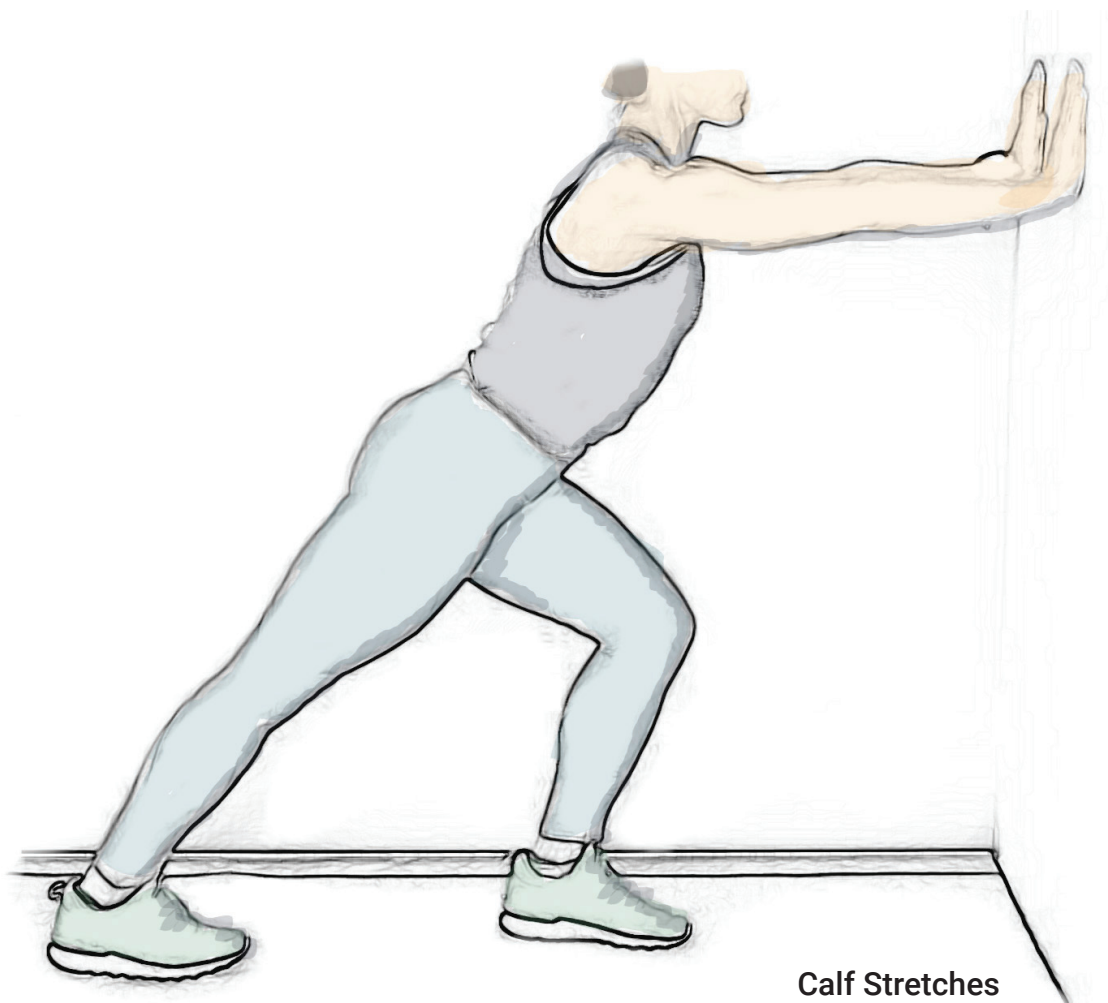
Hold the position for 10 seconds and relax. Repeat this exercise 20 times for each foot or until you feel tired (whichever is sooner).

Eccentric Strengthening

Eccentric strengthening is contracting a muscle while it is getting longer. There is both a double and single leg drop. You should start with the double leg drop first and progress to the single leg drop under the guidance of a physiotherapist to ensure you do not fall.

Double leg drop:

Stand at the edge of a stair, or a raised platform that is stable, with just the front half of your foot on the stair. This position will allow your heel to move up and down without hitting the stair. Care must be taken to ensure that you are balanced correctly to prevent falling and injury. Be sure to hold onto a railing to help you balance. It is important for your feet to be perpendicular to the step.



Calf Stretches

Lift your heels off the ground then slowly lower your heels to the lowest point possible. Repeat this step 20 times. This exercise should be done in a slow, controlled fashion. Rapid movement can create the risk of damage to the tendon. As the pain improves, you can increase the difficulty level of the exercise by wearing a backpack and incrementally increasing the amount of weight within it. An easy way to do this would be to add some books to the bag and then increase the weight one small book at a time on each occasion.

Single leg heel drop:

This exercise is performed similarly to the bilateral heel drop, except that all your weight is focused on one leg. This should be done only after the bilateral heel drop has been mastered.

How often should I undertake the exercises?

In the first two weeks, do both the calf stretches and eccentric strengthening once a day every other day. After two weeks, you will have acclimatised to the exercises and they can then be

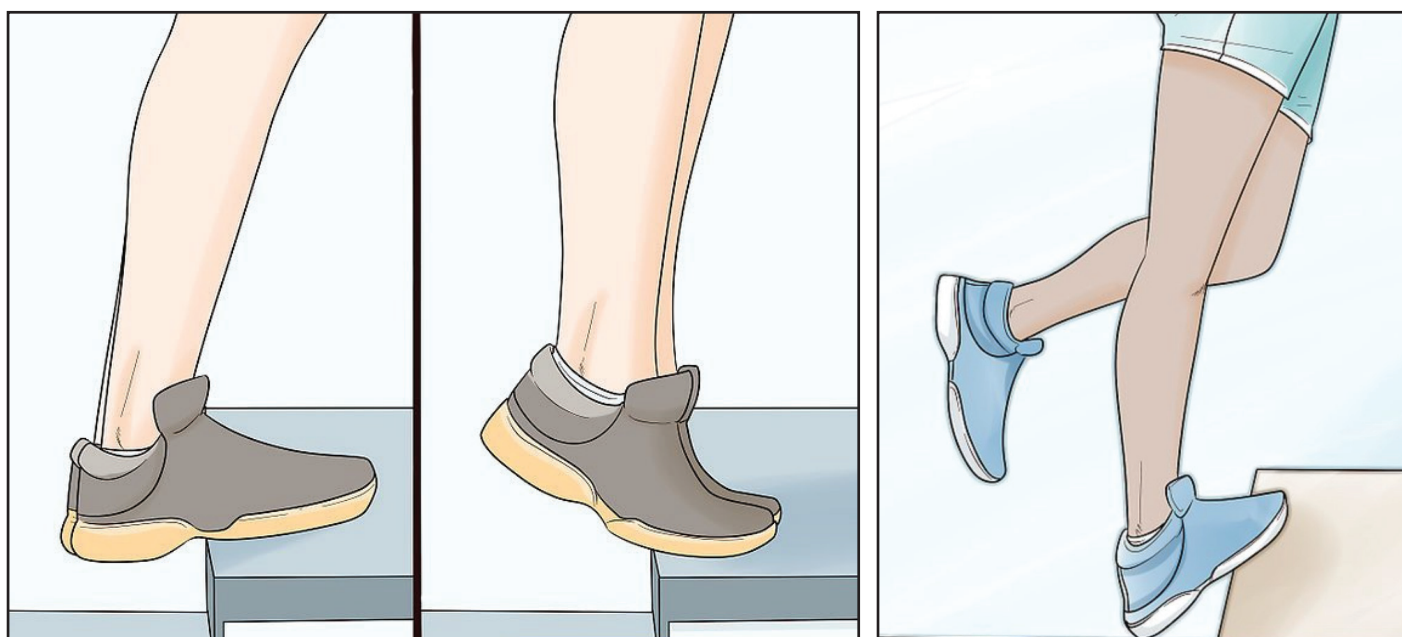
increased to once a day daily for two weeks. After these two weeks, you should be able to perform the exercises twice daily which is typically in the morning and evening.

How do I know if I am doing the exercises correctly?

The exercises should induce a feel of ‘stretching’ of the calf muscles and Achilles tendon, whilst afterwards, there may be a tingling or cramping feeling in the calf. If these are not experienced, seeing a physiotherapist to ensure the proper technique is being followed would be recommended.

What are the next steps?

In most patients, improvement will be slow and gradual. Diligently performed exercises should bring about a reduction in pain by two months, but if not, then shockwave therapy is considered. Beyond this, surgery is possible although rarely needed these days due to the efficacy of non-surgical management.



Double Leg Drop

Single Leg Heel Drop

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