

Can simple exercises and treatments help heal your achy Achilles tendon and get you back on your feet?



What is the problem?

Many people who are highly active or who are increasing their activity level suffer from nagging Achilles tendon pain that can sideline them from sports and daily activities, leaving them searching for effective ways to heal and regain their mobility.

How did the team study the question?

A team of experts reviewed the latest scientific studies on Achilles tendon pain treatments, carefully comparing different approaches to find out which ones work best for helping people recover and get back to their normal activities.

What did the team find?

The research found that doing specific tendon-loading exercises is the best first step for treating Achilles tendon pain. These exercises, which involve putting controlled stress on the tendon, should be done at least three times a week at a level that's challenging but not too painful. The study also showed that combining these exercises with education about the condition can be helpful. While other treatments like taping or heel lifts might provide some relief, the evidence for their effectiveness isn't as strong. Overall, the research suggests that a mix of targeted exercises and understanding your condition is key to healing an achy Achilles tendon.

How can this research be used?

This study's findings are valuable for both patients and healthcare providers dealing with Achilles tendon pain. People experiencing this issue can use the information to start a home exercise program, focusing on tendon-loading exercises as a primary treatment. Physical therapists and healthcare providers can use these results to guide their treatment plans, recommending specific exercises and educating patients about their condition. Coaches and athletic trainers can also benefit from this knowledge, helping them prevent and manage Achilles tendon problems in athletes. By following these evidence-based recommendations, individuals with Achilles tendon pain may recover faster and avoid unnecessary treatments, potentially saving time and money while getting back to their normal activities sooner.

Cautions

This study doesn't have all the answers for everyone with Achilles tendon pain. It mostly looked at people who've had pain for a while and have pain in the middle of the Achilles tendon, also known as “midportion Achilles tendinopathy.” So, it might not work the same for people who just started having pain or who have insertional Achilles tendinopathy (pain near the heel bone). Also, the study can't tell us which exact exercises are best for each person. Everyone's different, so what works great for one person might not work as well for another. It's always a good idea to talk to a healthcare provider or physical therapist before starting any new exercise program, especially if you have ongoing pain.

Citation

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Stiffness, and Muscle Power Deficits: Midportion Achilles Tendinopathy Revision 2024. *Journal of Orthopaedic & Sports Physical Therapy*, 54(12), CPG1-CPG32. <https://doi.org/10.2519/jospt.2024.0302>

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