

Eccentric calf muscle training for the treatment of Insertional Achilles Tendinopathy [exercise for left heel pain illustrated]

Eccentric loading has been proven to be very effective in treating pain in the mid portion of the Achilles tendon. These exercises have recently been modified for situations where the pain is not in the tendon itself, but where the tendon attaches to the bone.

Stage 1: Single Leg Heel Lowering Exercises

1. Initially perform a gentle warm up by walking at a moderate pace for five minutes;
2. Stand with your right foot on a box or bottom step of a stair case and your left foot on the floor. If your right heel is painful, turn around with your left foot on the box/stair and your right foot on the floor.
3. Transfer your weight to the step/stair foot and straighten your knee. This will force you to stand on tip toe on your floor foot (see figure 1)
4. Now transfer your weight to the floor foot and lift the step/stair foot (see figure 2)
5. Keeping you knee straight **SLOWLY** lower your floor heel to the ground;
6. Repeat 14 more times;
7. Rest for 20 seconds;
8. Carry out a second set of 15 heel drops, this time with the floor knee slightly bent. This strengthens the different calf muscles.
9. If both heels are painful, turn around and repeat the exercise as described;
10. Following the exercise programme, ice the back of the heel for ten minutes.



Figure 1



Figure 2

You should carry out three sets of 15 repetitions three times per day, seven days a week

In the early stages this exercise **MAY BE PAINFUL**, but do not worry. This is normal and experience shows that the tendon will not rupture and, in most cases, will get better as a result of the exercise.

When there is no pain during or after the three sets of repetitions then move onto stage 2.

Stage 2: Single Leg Heel Lowering Exercises with extra weight

1. As in stage 2 but this time wearing a back pack adding 5kg weight (see figure 3);
2. When these exercises can be done with no pain, progress by increasing the weight by 2kg at a time to reach a new level of painful training.
3. Continue the exercises for a total of 12 weeks. If your symptoms are no better consult your doctor.



Figure 3