

# Tendonitis

Tendonitis is when a tendon swells (becomes inflamed) after a tendon injury.

There are tendons all over your body. They connect your muscles to bones in your joints, for example, in your knees, elbows and shoulders.

Tendonitis can cause joint pain, stiffness and affect how a tendon moves.

You can treat mild tendonitis yourself and you should feel better within 2 to 3 weeks.

## Causes of tendonitis

The causes of tendonitis are usually sudden, sharp movements or repetitive exercise. Repetitive exercise can include running, jumping or throwing.

Repetitive movements, or having poor posture or technique while at work or playing a sport can also cause tendonitis. This is called repetitive strain injury (RSI).

## Symptoms of tendonitis

The main symptoms of tendonitis include:

- pain in a tendon that gets worse when you move
- difficulty moving the joint
- feeling a grating or crackling sensation when you move the tendon
- swelling, sometimes with heat or redness

## Treatment for tendonitis

You can treat tendonitis at home.

To help manage pain and to support the tendon:

- try to avoid moving the tendon for 2 to 3 days
- wrap an ice pack or a bag of frozen peas in a tea towel and put it on the tendon for up to 20 minutes, every 2 to 3 hours
- support the tendon by wrapping an elastic bandage, tube bandage or soft brace around the

area

You can buy bandages and braces from pharmacies. The bandage or brace should be snug, not tight.

Take the bandage or brace off before you go to bed.

When you can move the injured area without pain, keep moving the area so that the joint does not become stiff.

To help prevent further injury or pain, try to avoid:

- heavy lifting, strong gripping or twisting actions that make the symptoms worse
- playing sports, until the tendon has recovered

Talk to your pharmacist about products and medications that can help. Paracetamol and ibuprofen can help to ease the pain. Your pharmacist may also recommend a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) cream or gel that you rub on your skin.

### You should contact your GP if:

- your symptoms do not improve within 2 to 3 weeks
- you're in a lot of pain
- you think you have torn (ruptured) a tendon

If the pain is sudden and severe and happened during an accident or activity, you may have torn a tendon. You might have heard a popping or snapping sound when the pain started.

If your tendon is torn, your GP may refer you to a specialist for assessment. They may refer you for an x-ray or scan if they think you have another injury, for example, a broken bone.

## Treatment for tendonitis from a GP

A GP may prescribe a stronger painkiller or suggest you use an NSAID cream or gel on your skin to ease the pain.

If the pain is severe, lasts a long time or your movement is limited, your GP may refer you for physiotherapy. You can also choose to book appointments privately.

If physiotherapy does not help, your GP may refer you to an orthopaedic specialist. This is a doctor that specialises in muscles and bones.

Treatment for severe tendonitis can include:

- steroid injections, which may provide short-term pain relief
- shockwave therapy, which may help with healing
- platelet-rich plasma injections (PRP), which may help with healing
- surgery to remove damaged tissue or repair a ruptured tendon

If you have problems with the Achilles tendon, you cannot have steroid injections.

## Preventing tendonitis

You cannot always prevent tendonitis. But there are things that you can do to help reduce the chance of a tendon injury.

### Do

- ✓ warm up before you exercise and gently stretch afterwards
- ✓ wear supportive shoes or insoles for exercise
- ✓ take regular breaks from repetitive exercises

### Don't

- ✗ do not over-exercise tired muscles
- ✗ do not start a new sport without some training or practice
- ✗ do not do the same repetitive exercises

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