

It's race time! Runners all over are training and getting ready for the summer months. This is when old, as well as new, aches and pains present themselves. Fortunately for many runners, injuries may only last a few weeks and most of them are preventable. That is, if you prepare your body for the intense workout properly. Listen to the things that we have all heard before, such as stretching and strengthening the leg muscles, wearing good shoes, and allowing your body the proper rest.

A recent article from Time to Run discussed the five most common running injuries - The Big Five. The article included everything from whether or not to continue to run with them, how to treat them, and when it is time to see a doctor. One of the five was Achilles Tendonitis, which is an inflammatory condition of the Achilles tendon. The Achilles is a large tendon that connects the two major calf muscles, gastrocnemius and soleus, to the back of the heel bone. This tendon can be forced to work too hard if under much stress. It can become inflamed, and over time produce scar tissue, which is less flexible than the tendon. This can also lead to a tear or rupture, if stress on the tendon continues.

How do you know you have it? Dull or sharp pain along the back of the tendon, but usually close to the heel, limited ankle flexibility, redness or heat over the painful area, a nodule that can be felt on the tendon, or a cracking sound with ankle movement.

What causes it? Tight or fatigued calf muscles can place more pressure on the Achilles during running. Poor stretching, rapidly increasing distance, or over-training such as excessive hill running or speed work can be contributing factors. Improper shoe wear also plays a part. For instance, runners who over-pronate may need more supportive shoes and/or orthotic inserts.

What can you do about it? If you start to suspect that you may have Achilles Tendonitis, then you need to stop running for a while. Apply ice to the Achilles a few times a day to reduce inflammation. Avoid weight-bearing exercises. Self massage may be helpful in breaking up scar tissue. Also, start to stretch the calf muscles gently. If symptoms get worse then consult a physician for more formalized treatment. They may recommend that you return to Physical Rehabilitation Institute for physical therapy treatment and advisement on preventative measures, such as joint mobilization, specific therapeutic exercises, modalities that can expedite the tissue healing process, direction on what to look for regarding shoes, and, if needed, development/fitting of corrective orthotics.

Depending on the severity of the injury, a full recovery can take six to eight weeks. Do not run until you are able to exercise without any pain or released by your Physician or Physical Therapist.

If you find the information interesting, then keep reading! The next few months will be a continuation of The Big Five.

www.time-to-run.com/injuries/thebig5/index.htm

The health information contained herein is provided for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace discussions with a healthcare provider. Decisions regarding patient care must be made with a healthcare provider, considering the unique characteristics of the patient.

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