

Treatable Foot Ailments

Achilles Tendon Overview

The Achilles tendon is the thick band of tissue on the back of the leg which connects your calf musculature to the heel bone. It assists in propelling the body forward during gait by raising your heel off the ground and plays a significant role when performing activities such as walking, running, and jumping. Due to its major role in said activities, the Achilles tendon is susceptible to a variety of injuries. Some of the common conditions associated with the Achilles tendon are:

- Achilles tendinitis
- Achilles tendinosis
- Achilles tendon rupture

Achilles Tendinitis

Achilles tendinitis is an inflammation of the tendon generally caused by overuse or sudden increases in activity levels. The inflammation occurs in the central region or midsubstance of the tendon or the portion of the tendon that attaches to the heel bone. Symptoms of Achilles tendinitis range from pain and swelling to the back of the leg and/or thickening of the Achilles tendon. Pain typically worsens with increased activity and the affected region of the tendon may be tender to the touch. Treatment options may consist of rest, stretching and strengthening exercises, medications, a specialized walking boot, orthotics, heel lift inserts, shoe gear modifications, and physical therapy.

Achilles Tendinosis

Achilles tendinosis is degeneration or thinning of the tendon which occurs after leaving Achilles tendinitis untreated after an extended period of time. The degeneration of the tendon can cause small tears in the tendon rendering it weaker and more susceptible to rupture. There is often ongoing inflammation as an attempt for the body to heal the chronically diseased tendon. Symptoms and treatments of Achilles tendinosis are similar to those of Achilles tendinitis. In attempts to regenerate the diseased portions of the tendon, injection therapies such as stem cells or platelet rich plasma can be performed. If conservative treatments fail to address the symptoms, sometimes surgery is required to remove unhealthy tissue or even restore the tendon.

Achilles Tendon Rupture

A rupture of the Achilles tendon is a partial or complete tear which occurs with an abrupt overstretching of the tendon. This can occur upon sudden exertion when taking off to sprint or from forcefully jumping, for example. Ruptures can occasionally be caused by medications, such as certain antibiotics or steroids, which weaken the tendon. Symptoms can range from a sudden sharp pain or pop in the back of the leg followed by pain, swelling, tenderness and difficulty walking. Depending on the type and severity of the rupture, treatment may consist of rest, casting, use of a walking boot, physical therapy, or surgical repair of the tendon.

For a comprehensive evaluation and treatment of your Achilles tendon condition, please call Seaside Foot and Ankle or schedule an appointment online.

Arthritis Overview

Arthritis refers to inflammation and tenderness of one or more joints. The feet and ankles are more susceptible to certain types of arthritis because of constant use and enduring the weight of the body. There is a myriad of arthritic conditions that occur throughout the body, but a few common types found in the feet and ankles are:

- Osteoarthritis
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Post-traumatic Arthritis
- Gouty Arthritis

Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis is a degenerative process that occurs when the cartilage in joints wears down over time. Cartilage is the tissue on the ends of bones which allows for smooth motion of joints. When the cartilage wears down, bone rubs against bone which causes pain, inflammation, and bone spurs. Osteoarthritis can occur in a single or multiple joints of one or both feet. Symptoms of osteoarthritis range from pain which increases with activity or after rest, stiffness, decreased range of motion, or the feeling of grinding within a joint. Treatment options include rest, medications, shoe gear modifications, decreasing or adjusting activity levels, orthotics, specialty braces, and the use of assistive devices such as a cane or walker. In more severe cases, an affected joint may require surgery such as removing painful bone spurs, joint replacement, or fusion of the joint to eliminate painful motion.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune condition in which the body's immune system attacks the synovium of the joint. The synovium is a tissue surrounding the joint which produces and maintains joint-lubricating fluid. The synovium becomes inflamed and can eventually cause the joint to erode, which causes pain and deformity. Rheumatoid arthritis typically affects the same joints of both feet. Symptoms are like those of osteoarthritis with pain often being worse in the morning. Treatment of rheumatoid arthritis is like that of osteoarthritis. Oftentimes rheumatoid arthritis is also treated with special drugs to decrease the body's immune response.

Post-traumatic Arthritis

Post-traumatic arthritis develops in a joint of the foot and ankle after sustaining an injury. An injury such as a joint dislocation or fracture within or near the joint increases the likelihood of developing post-traumatic arthritis. Post-traumatic arthritis affects a joint involved in an injury, and similar to osteoarthritis, results in the degeneration of the cartilage. This causes pain, swelling, stiffness and bone spurs. Treatment of this condition is similar to that of osteoarthritis.

Gouty Arthritis

Gout is an inflammatory arthritis which occurs when too much uric acid in the blood crystallizes and deposits in the joints causing severe pain, redness, and swelling. High uric levels in the blood can be caused by genetics, certain medications, and frequent consumption of purine rich foods such as seafoods, certain meats, and alcoholic beverages. Gout most commonly occurs in the great toe but can occur in other joints as well. Pain caused by gout can be severe and an attack often occurs at night. Treatment of an acute gout attack consists of certain anti-inflammatory medications to decrease pain, inflammation, and length of the attack. Chronic gout is typically treated by dietary adjustments and medications to moderate uric acid levels in order to decrease frequency of attacks.

For a comprehensive evaluation and treatment of your arthritic condition, please call Seaside Foot and Ankle or schedule an appointment online.

Bunion Overview

A bunion is a deformity of the big toe joint which occurs when the bones are forced out of alignment. A bunion occurs gradually over time, typically beginning with the classic bump on the inside of the foot followed by the great toe drifting toward the second toe. Wearing high-heeled shoes, shoes with pointed toes, and narrow shoes put one at higher risk of developing a bunion. For these reasons, women are much more likely to develop bunions than men. Other factors that may put you at higher risk of developing a bunion are: having flat feet, having had a previous injury, or having an inflammatory condition such as rheumatoid arthritis.

Patients with bunions typically experience symptoms such as pain, swelling, decreased range of motion of the big toe joint, abnormal rubbing against shoes, callusing, and difficulty walking. Treatment of bunions consists of wide shoes to accommodate the deformity, orthotics to stabilize the joint, and padding the deformity to prevent rubbing. More severe bunions may require surgical correction of the deformity.

For a comprehensive evaluation and treatment of your bunion, please call Seaside Foot and Ankle or schedule an appointment online.

Foot and Ankle Fracture Overview

A fracture is a complete or partial break through a bone. A fracture can result in multiple fragments of bones and sometimes protrude out of the overlying skin in more severe cases. If left untreated, fractures can result in deformity, chronic pain, and post-traumatic arthritis. Symptoms of any type of fracture can include pain, swelling, bruising and possibly inability to bear weight. Depending on the type, location, and severity, a fracture of any kind may be treated conservatively via immobilization, offloading, and rest until the fracture fragments heal back together. Immobilization may be achieved in several ways. Buddy taping the toes or wearing a walking boot are two examples. If your fracture is displaced, or multiple bones are fractured, it may be required to surgically repair the fracture using surgical hardware, such as plates and screws. Common fractures that are treated at Seaside Foot and Ankle are:

- Ankle fractures
- Forefoot and toe fractures
- Midfoot fractures
- Heel (calcaneus) fractures
- Fifth metatarsal fractures

Ankle Fractures

The ankle joint consists of three bones: the tibia, fibula, and talus. The tibia and fibula are the long bones of your leg and they meet with the talus (the ankle bone) to form the ankle joint. The ankle's function is to allow your foot segment to move up and down when performing activity. An ankle fracture consists of a fracture to the fibula, the tibia or both. Ankle fractures are typically caused by a sports injury, high energy trauma or fall from height.

Forefoot and Toe Fractures

The foot is more complex and consists of 28 bones, each of which can sustain a fracture. Fractures of the forefoot and toes are often caused by dropping an object on the foot or accidentally kicking an object, such as a bedpost. These bones are also susceptible to stress fractures which are often caused by the repetitive stress associated with activities such as running.

Midfoot Fractures

A Lisfranc injury is a common midfoot injury which typically occurs during contact or extreme sports. It involves dislocation and/or fracture of one or more bones of the midfoot and can be extremely painful and debilitating. Treatment involves surgical repair of the fracture/dislocation.

Heel (Calcaneus) Fractures

The heel bone, or calcaneus, is a sturdy bone that is one of the primary weight bearing bones of the foot. In order to endure the constant load of body weight, the calcaneus has a thick outer layer. It takes a significant amount of force to break the heel bone, but it can shatter into many pieces when broken, depending on the type of fracture. The most common cause of a calcaneus fracture is a fall from height, such as falling off a ladder or roof.

Fifth Metatarsal Fractures

The fifth metatarsal is a long bone that runs along the outside of your foot connecting to your fifth toe. The base of the bone serves as the attachment site for certain tendons and ligaments, making it susceptible to fractures such as avulsion or Jones fractures.

Hammertoes

Hammertoes are deformities in which the toes are contracted into a “curled” position. Hammertoes are caused by a muscular imbalance in which muscles on the top and bottom of the feet compete to move the toe upward or downward, ultimately resulting in contracted toes.

Hammertoe deformities can occur on one or both feet, single or multiple toes. People who commonly develop hammertoes may:

- Have flat feet
- Have cavus feet (High-arched feet)
- Have undergone other foot/ankle surgery or experienced trauma
- Have a neurologic disorder
- Frequently wear high heeled shoes or shoes with a narrow toe box

Ingrown Toenails

An ingrown toenail occurs when the nail starts to grow within the surrounding skin. It can occur on any toe, but typically occurs on the big toe. Some common causes of ingrown toenail include:

- Improper Trimming - Cutting the nails too far down in the corners can increase the likelihood of the nail growing into the skin.

- Footwear - Shoes that are too tight around the toes or that come to a point can increase pressure where the toenail meets the surrounding skin, thus causing the nail to grow within the skin.
- Trauma or Foot Deformities - Deformities of the foot such as bunions, flat feet, or hammertoes make one more likely to develop ingrown toenails. Also, traumatic events such as stubbing a toe or activities, such as kicking a ball, that place repeated pressure on the toes can increase one's chances of developing ingrown toenails.
- Nail Conditions - Fungal toenails and other conditions such as Psoriasis can change the thickness and texture of the toenail, leading to increased chances of developing an ingrown toenail.

Ingrown toenails usually cause redness, pain, and swelling of the skin bordering the toenail. If the infection goes untreated, it can spread up the foot or to the underlying bone.

If there is infection or you have other conditions such as diabetes or poor blood circulation, please reach out to your physician at Seaside Foot and Ankle for comprehensive treatment and evaluation. Otherwise, soaking the toe in room temperature water and Epsom salt along with gentle massaging of the surrounding skin, may help to resolve the issue over time.

Treatments performed at Seaside Foot and Ankle may include providing relief of the ingrown nail by cutting out the offending portion of the nail or separating it from the surrounding skin by lifting it. Lifting the nail may include putting cotton or dental floss under the nail to keep it clear of surrounding irritated skin.

In severe cases, a portion of the nail or the entire nail itself may need to be removed. A portion of the nail "root" can be destroyed to ensure the nail does not grow back at the nail border, thus permanently preventing recurrence.

For a comprehensive evaluation and treatment of your suspected ingrown toenail, please call Seaside Foot and Ankle or schedule an appointment online.

Plantar Fasciitis

The plantar fascia is a thick band of tissue that spans across the bottom of the foot, from the bottom of the heel bone to the ball of the foot. It serves to hold up the arch of the foot and absorb shock when walking or running. When there is increased stress or pressure on the plantar fascia, it becomes inflamed and is then termed plantar fasciitis. Plantar fasciitis is the number one cause of heel pain and affects 1 in 10 adults at some point throughout their lifetime.

Some of the risk factors for developing plantar fasciitis include:

- Tight calf muscles
- Tight achilles tendon
- Repetitive movements
- High impact activities
- Starting a new activity
- Flat feet
- High-arched feet

Some common symptoms of plantar fasciitis are sharp pain in the bottom of the heel or in the arch that is worse with your first few steps out of bed or after a period of rest. Pain will typically feel better after walking around for a few minutes but may or may not persist throughout activity.

Treatments for plantar fasciitis are based on the origin of the patient's symptoms and may include stretching, icing, massaging techniques, rest from activity, supportive shoes, orthotics, physical therapy, injection therapy, shockwave therapy, and surgical treatment.

For a comprehensive evaluation and treatment of your heel pain, please call Seaside Foot and Ankle or schedule an appointment online.

Sports Injuries Overview

Sports injuries are a group of injuries that commonly occur during activity. Some sports injuries are correlated to specific sports such as turf toe, an injury often occurring in football or soccer in which the great toe bends too far causing injury. Sports injuries often require early treatment so as to not cause long term problems such as chronic ankle instability or tendinosis. Some other injuries often occurring during sporting activities are:

- Ankle sprains and fractures
- Achilles tendon ruptures or tendinitis
- Posterior tibial tendon injury
- Peroneal tendon injury
- Lisfranc (midfoot) fractures
- Sesamoiditis or sesamoid fracture
- Stress fractures
- Plantar fasciitis

Regardless of the sports injury, some of the common symptoms include:

- Pain
- Swelling
- Limited movement
- Difficulty or inability to bear weight
- Stiffness
- Bruising
- Weakness

Treatment of sports injuries depends on the type and severity of the specific injury. Some of the treatment options include heat, cold, resting your foot, adjusting your activities, custom orthotics, bracing, taping, casting, and steroid injections. If your injury is not responding to conservative treatment, surgery may be required to repair damaged or inflamed tissues such as ligaments, tendons and/or bones.

A key component of treatment of most sports injuries is rehabilitation. Whether the patient undergoes conservative or surgical treatment, physical therapy is typically employed during the recovery course to return to sport safely and quickly. Rehabilitation assists in regaining any lost range of motion, strength and functionality of the foot and ankle.

For a comprehensive evaluation and treatment of your sports injury, please call Seaside Foot and Ankle or schedule an appointment online.

Tendonitis

Tendonitis is the inflammation of a tendon caused by injury. Some of the common tendons of the foot and ankle that develop tendonitis are:

- Achilles tendon
- Posterior tibial tendon
- Peroneal tendons
- Anterior tibial tendon
- Flexor hallucis longus tendon which allows the great toe to flex downward

Some common causes of tendonitis are:

- Acute injury or trauma: strain, fall, sports injury, or irritation from inappropriate shoes
- Overuse injury: tendon repeatedly overloaded from repetitive movements such as running or walking
- Abnormal foot structure: high arches or flat feet
- Inflammatory disease: Certain types of arthritis and gout sometimes cause tendonitis

Treatment of tendonitis depends on the specific tendon that is inflamed as well as the severity of the condition. Some conservative treatments consist of ice, decreasing activity levels, anti-inflammatory medications, orthotics, shoe gear modifications, taping and strapping techniques, bracing, physical therapy, shockwave therapy, injection therapy, or use of a CAM walker boot. If the condition is not responsive to conservative treatment, surgery may be necessary to repair damaged or inflamed portions of the tendon. Surgery can be helpful to restore function and decrease pain levels.

For a comprehensive evaluation and treatment of your tendonitis, please call Seaside Foot and Ankle or schedule an appointment online.

Warts

Warts are hard, grainy lesions that can occur anywhere on the body. Warts on the feet are typically around the toes or on the bottoms of the feet, called plantar warts. Warts are viral infections that are introduced through breaks in the skin or weakened areas. Warts on the feet are typically caused by Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Because every immune system is different, not everyone who comes in contact with HPV will develop warts. The virus thrives in warm and moist environments so oftentimes the virus is transmitted by walking barefoot around swimming pools or locker rooms.

Everyone is at risk of developing warts, but warts more commonly affect:

- People with suppressed immune systems
- Children and teenagers
- People who have had the virus before

- People who frequently walk barefoot, such as in areas like locker rooms or swimming pools

Symptoms of the wart may vary depending on location. A wart on the toes or top of the foot will present as a raised, fleshy, grainy growth that is usually not painful, but may uncomfortably rub against shoes. A wart on the bottom of the foot can often present itself as a painful callus that is worse when walking or standing. Because it is on the bottom of the foot, a plantar wart can sometimes be driven to deeper layers of skin caused by the pressure that comes from walking. Warts sometimes have small dots on them which are clotted blood vessels giving it a “grainy” appearance.

Warts are relatively harmless and can often resolve on their own without treatment. Unfortunately, this can often be a lengthy process lasting years. To expedite removal of painful warts, one can use over the counter remedies such as patches and liquids that freeze or burn the lesion. If your warts do not respond to over-the-counter treatments, your foot and ankle physician at Seaside Foot and Ankle can treat the lesion using stronger medications such as acids or liquid nitrogen. Paring down the lesion using a blade may also be required to decrease thickness and improve efficacy of the medication. Warts can typically be fully eradicated after a couple of weekly or bi-weekly treatments.

For a comprehensive evaluation and treatment of your suspected wart, please call Seaside Foot and Ankle or schedule an appointment online.