

Achilles Tendinitis/Bursitis

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By Dr. Derek Conte

Do you wake in the morning with a pain in your heel or calf so intense it forces you to limp for five minutes until you work it out? You may be suffering with Achilles tendinitis/bursitis, usually caused by over activity, tightness of the soft tissues or from doing ballistic exercises that involve jumping. It is more frequent with age and more frequent in men.

The Achilles tendon is named for the great Greek mythological warrior-hero, Achilles, thought to be unbeatable on the battlefield. This invincibility was conveyed to him when his mother held the baby Achilles by one of his heels and dipped him into the river Styx, leaving the heel his only vulnerable part which, ironically, would lead to his death when he was shot there with an arrow. The term, "Achilles Heel" has since been passed down to us as an expression denoting a singular weakness in a strong person.

The Achilles tendon connects the calf muscles (gastrocnemius and soleus) to the back of the heel bone (calcaneus). It is the largest tendon in the body and takes tremendous strain even during the act of walking. One source says up to 1,000 pounds can be sustained by it. In addition to the tendon there are bursae (cushions) between the tendon and the heel bone which allows the tendon to "glide" with little friction over the bone when in motion. If there is too much tightness in the muscles, the tendons become too taut, exerting more pressure on the bursae and the system becomes inflamed and painful.

But there is more to Achilles problems than heel pain alone. It must be understood that the body's structures do not act in isolated ways, but rather in combination with other structures when performing even the simplest movements. For instance, walking requires the activation of the muscles of the bottom of the foot along with the tendons and fascia that support them, so when caring for Achilles tendinitis/bursitis it is vital to work with these structures as well.

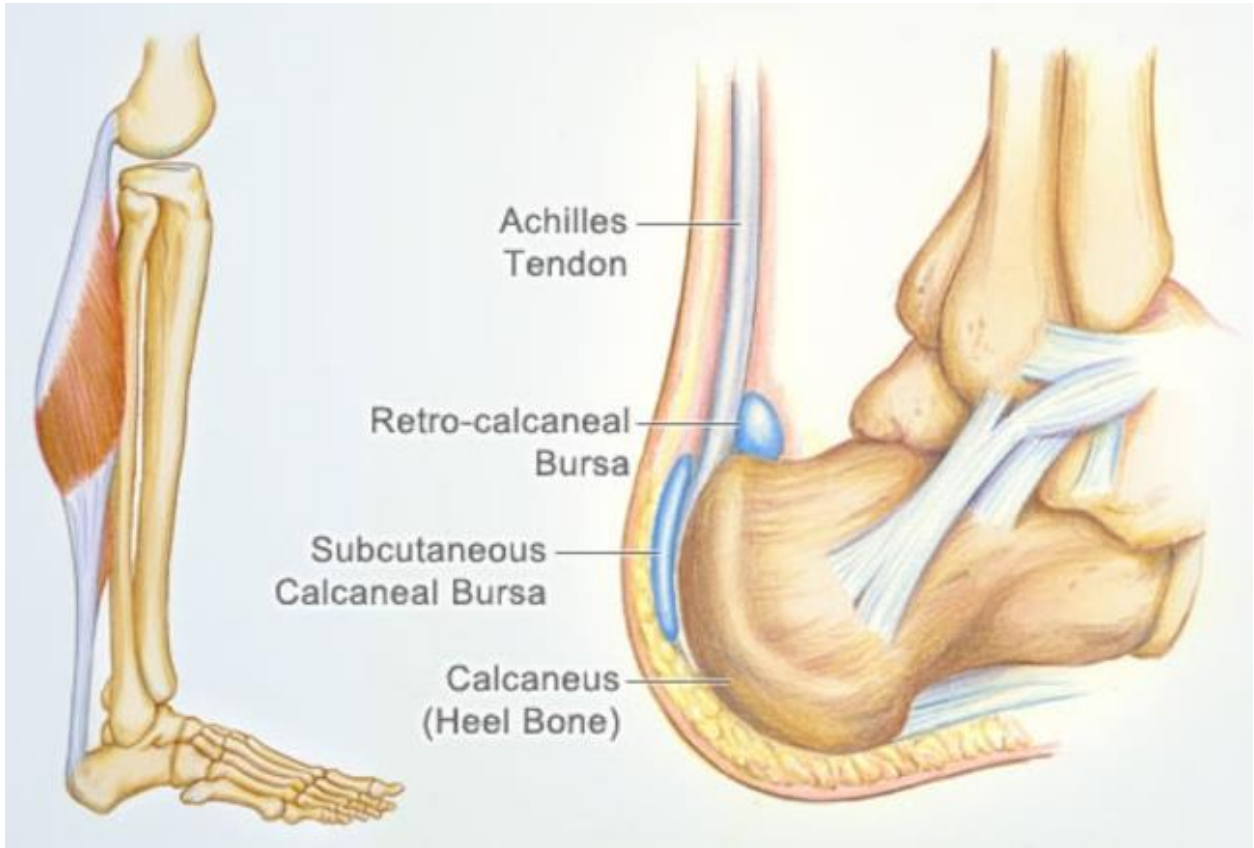
Chiropractic adjustments will restore alignment of the frame and remove asymmetrical delivery of weight to the legs and feet and eliminate nerve irritation which makes muscles too tight.

Massage by a trained licensed therapist who understands the anatomy will help normalize soft tissue tone and reduce swelling, a primary cause of the pain.

What is the best preventative? Stretching of the hamstring, calf and bottom of the feet should be done regularly, even if there is no injury. The primary cause of injury is loss of elasticity in the body!

Simple maintenance is always cheaper and less painful than a big fix.

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Achilles Tendon

Retro-calcaneal Bursa

Subcutaneous Calcaneal Bursa

Calcaneus (Heel Bone)