

SURGERY FOR THE INSERTION OF THE ACHILLES TENDON

Postoperative Recovery Protocol

Type of Procedure: Outpatient
Length of Procedure: 1 hour
Anesthesia: general anesthesia or twilight with a nerve block

The Achilles tendon insertion and the inflamed heel: what is it?

The Achilles tendon attaches to the heel bone (the calcaneus) over a very broad area. Although the tendon is only approximately one-centimeter thick, its attachment spreads over a three and a half-centimeter area on the calcaneus.

Recurrent stress on the tendon where it attaches (the insertion) leads to inflammation, microscopic tearing of the tendon, swelling and pain.

This swelling can be associated with inflammation of the space between the tendon and the calcaneus, called the retrocalcaneal bursa. At times the back of the heel can begin to enlarge and get quite thick. The thickening is partly as a result of bone spurs that may develop on the back of the calcaneus which can then grow up into the substance of the Achilles tendon causing further wear and tear of the tendon.

Treatment of the insertion of Achilles tendonitis commences with rest, elevation of the heel on the sole of the shoe, and physical therapy treatments. All of these are designed to decrease the inflammation on the tendon that occurs when walking, since this stretches the Achilles tendon.

Achilles and retrocalcaneal bursa surgery: General facts of recovery

- The surgery is performed as an outpatient procedure, using local anesthetic
- A 2-3cm incision is made on the back of the heel
- Following surgery, you will need to use crutches for two weeks
- Driving is permitted at one week if it is the left foot, and at about two weeks if the right
- At the first office visit, you will be able to start walking in either a cast or a removable walking boot
- The boot is worn for 4-6 weeks, and then you are able to wear a shoe
- The shoe should have an open back to prevent rubbing on the heel and tendon. You will be better with this shoe for about one month.
- Physical therapy is an important part of your recovery
- An orthotic arch support is important in your shoe, and will be made for you using a computer gait analysis of your walking in the office
- You can expect swelling and tenderness at the back of the heel for about 4-6 months after surgery

Specific Post-Operative Course:



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Day 1

1. Foot wrapped in bulky bandage
2. Ice and elevate the foot
3. Take pain medication
4. Expect numbness in foot for 12 hours
5. Bloody drainage through bandage expected
6. Do not change bandage
7. Do not change the dressing

Day 10-14

1. First follow-up in the office
2. X-rays taken
3. Dressing changed, sutures are removed
4. Boot or cast is applied to the foot
5. Weight-bearing in the cast as tolerated
6. You may drive if the left foot is involved

Week 4

1. The boot is removed
2. Stretching exercises are begun
3. Physical therapy is important
4. You can do a lot of the therapy yourself each day
5. We will perform a computer analysis of the foot and make an orthotic arch support
6. Wear an open heel shoe for one month
7. The recovery can be prolonged after this surgery. Expect continuous improvement for up to a year

