

Achilles Tendinitis Rehabilitation Exercises

These exercises are designed to help you initiate your rehabilitation protocol as a method to self-treat and manage your Achilles tendinitis pain. The goal is to improve your ankle, calf, and foot mobility while decreasing your pain levels and improving the general strength of the affected area. If your symptoms begin to worsen when performing any of these exercises, please discontinue the exercise.

Calf Self-Mobilization Using a Massage Tool

Use a massage tool such as the Thera-Band Standard Roller Massager or the Stick Self Roller Massager. If this is painful, be sure to not exceed a mild to moderate amount of pain. Roll out the entire calf area and feel free to work on other areas of the leg that feel tight or restricted. Move slowly and spend extra time on the more painful areas.

Perform for 1-2 minutes per calf.



Calf Mobilization Using the Foam Roller

Place the involved calf/leg on the foam roller. Use your hands to lift your buttocks in the air. Roll your calf back and forth on the foam roll. To increase the pressure, place your opposite leg on top of the involved leg as you roll (as shown). Move slowly and spend extra time on the more painful areas. Be sure to mobilize the entire calf and feel free to work on other areas of the leg that feel tight or restricted. If this is painful, do not exceed a mild to moderate amount of pain.

Perform for 1-2 minutes per calf.



Plantar Fascia Mobilization using a Ball

Tightness in the foot can cause altered mechanics in the ankle and leg. This area is often restricted in cases of Achilles tendinitis. Use a tennis, lacrosse or golf ball to mobilize the plantar fascia. The amount of pressure should not exceed a moderate amount of pain. Roll the ball back and forth on the bottom of your foot. Move slowly and spend extra time on the more painful areas. Be sure to mobilize the entire foot.

Perform for 2-3 minutes per foot.



Foot and Ankle Stretch with a Strap

Place a strap (or belt) around the bottom of your foot. Pull your toes, foot, and ankle upward toward your shin until you feel a stretch in the bottom of your foot and/or your calf muscles. This stretch is best performed barefoot, but it can be performed with shoes on.

Perform 1-2 minutes on each leg, 2 or 3 times a day.



Calf Stretch – Gastrocnemius

While standing and leaning against a wall or counter, place one foot back behind you and bend the front knee until a gentle stretch is felt on the back of the lower leg. Maintain a good upright posture.

Your back knee should be straight the entire time with your heel on the ground.

Hold for 30 seconds, and 3 repetitions per side.

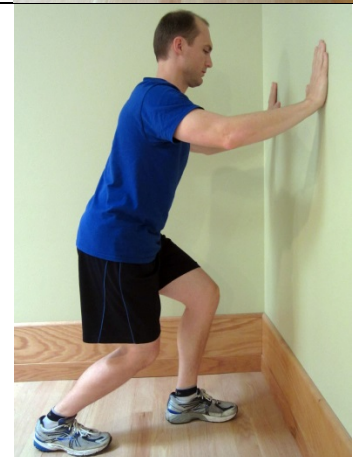


Calf Stretch – Soleus

While standing and leaning against a wall or counter, place one foot back behind you and bend the front knee until a gentle stretch is felt on the back of the lower leg. Maintain a good upright posture.

Your back knee should be bent the entire time with your heel on the ground.

Hold for 30 seconds, and 3 repetitions per side.



Calf Stretch – Soleus/Achilles

This exercise can be a little more aggressive and should be performed with caution initially. While standing, place your toes and the ball of your foot up against a wall or stair. Gently lean forward until you feel a stretch. You can try two different versions: with a straight knee (as shown) or gently bending your knee. Maintain a proper upright posture. Your heel remains on the ground.

Hold for 30 seconds, and 3 repetitions per side.



Balancing on One Foot

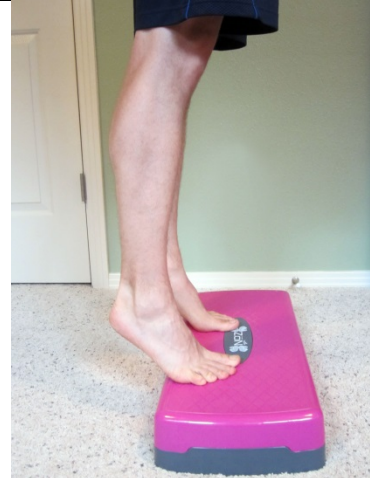
While standing near a counter top, stand on one foot. Use your hands on the counter top as needed to maintain your balance. Maintain a proper upright posture. The softer the surface you stand on, the more difficult the balance will be.

Hold for 30 seconds, and 3 repetitions per side.



Heel Raises – Starting Position

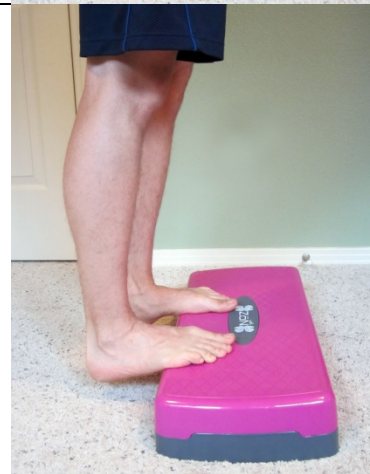
A key exercise is the heel raise. The emphasis should be on the eccentric control. Eccentric means when the muscle lengthens. In this exercise, the starting position is up on the tip toes, and the important component is the slow lowering of the heels. Spend several seconds to lower down the heels. I typically advise 1 second up and 5 seconds down.



Heel Raises – Ending Position

For normal strength, you should be able to perform 25 repetitions on one foot while using a counter top for minor balance only. (1 second up and 5 seconds down.) As you work on ankle and plantar flexion strength, start slowly as to not aggravate the Achilles tendon or painful area. Discontinue this exercise if your pain worsens.

Initially, perform with both feet. 10 repetitions at a time, up to 3 sets of 10 repetitions once per day. As your pain level decreases and your strength increases, progress to one foot only.



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