



**University  
Hospitals Sussex**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Tendinopathy

Patient information

## What is a tendon?

A tendon is a strong band of tissue that connects muscle to bone. Tendons help to move your joints when a muscle contracts. A joint is where 2 bones meet, such as the knee. Tendons also help give stability to a joint. A common example of a tendon is the Achilles tendon on the back of the lower leg.

## What is a tendinopathy?

Tendinopathy is the term used to describe an overuse injury to the tendon. This could be due to repetitive activities, such as sustained use of a screwdriver. Sometimes it can be due to starting a new sport or activity where the tendon is not yet strong enough to tolerate it. In older people, it may be due to age-related changes of the tendon.



## What are the signs and symptoms of a tendinopathy?

- Pain
- Swelling
- Reduced function of the tendon
- Stiffness
- Tendon thickening

## What are the risk factors/limitations to recovery?

Certain factors may affect the health of the tendon and limit how well it is able to heal. These include:

- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Menopause
- Inflammatory conditions
- Older age
- Work/sport demands

## How long will it take to improve?

Tendons respond relatively slowly to treatment. How quickly they improve will depend on many factors, including those listed above. Every case is different, but in general, most simple tendon problems will improve over a 12-week period. However, some cases can take several months to respond. You may have flare ups of your pain with good and bad days but it is important to not give up on your treatment plan too soon. Consistency and patience are essential to give you the best chance of a full recovery.

## What will help improve a tendinopathy?

Tendons respond to being worked and exercised. Normally, they have a range of work that they can tolerate. When injured that tolerance reduces, so the aim is to increase your tendon's work tolerance back to normal. In some cases, it may benefit you to get the tendon even stronger than it was before to reduce future injuries.

## What can help reduce pain?

- Pain medications – discuss this with your GP
- Education on tendinopathies
- Changing or stopping activities that make your symptoms worse
- Rest periods
- Using insoles/orthotics
- Using ice/heat

## What can help improve movement and strength?

- Movement exercises
- Early strength exercises
- Strength and conditioning programmes

# What can help me return to work/sport?

- Advice and encouragement
- Work/sports-specific exercises
- Monitoring symptoms
- Continuing and progressing strength and conditioning programmes.

# What exercises should I be doing?

You will have been given some specific exercises and management advice by your physiotherapist to help with your tendinopathy. These will vary from person to person depending on where your injury is, how severe your symptoms are, and what your specific goals are. Please follow the advice and guidance given by your physiotherapist.

# Who do I call if I have any questions?

If you have any questions or concerns, you can discuss this with your physiotherapist at your next appointment. Alternatively, you can call your physiotherapy department and leave a message for your physiotherapist to call you back.

**Royal Sussex County Hospital: 01273 523050**

**Hove Polyclinic: 0300 304 0118**

**Brighton General Hospital: 01273 665111**

**This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care in Brighton & Hove or Haywards Heath**

Ref. No. 2049

Publication date: 08/2021

Review date: 08/2024

© University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust Disclaimer: The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.