

# Achilles Tendon Debridement/Reconstruction

## INTRODUCTION

The Achilles tendon attaches the calf muscles to the heel bone (calcaneum). The Achilles tendon can become damaged or degenerate just above where it attaches to the heel bone - this is often called non-insertional tendinopathy. This causes pain at the back of the ankle and calf with inflammation and swelling.

## THE SURGERY

Achilles reconstruction involves a number of steps:

- General anaesthetic and IV antibiotics
- Prone position on the operating table
- Tourniquet around the thigh
- Small keyhole incisions around the Achilles (+/- mini-open incision if required for access)
- Insertion of arthroscope (camera) and keyhole surgery instruments for debridement of inflammatory/scar tissue
- Release of the plantaris tendon
- Closure of incision with sutures
- Local anaesthetic block
- Surgical shoe

## GUIDELINES FOR POST-OP RECOVERY

### HOSPITAL ADMISSION

- In hospital for 1 night, non-weightbearing on the day of surgery

### FIRST 2 WEEKS

- Elevate foot and rest
- Weightbearing as tolerated
- Dressings to stay dry and intact
- Strong painkillers as required
- Aspirin 100mg & Vitamin C 1g per day
- Antibiotics for 5 days

### 2 WEEK POST-OP APPOINTMENT

- Review by nurse & removal of dressings and sutures

### WEEKS 3-6

- Elevate foot when resting
- Daily scar massage from 3 weeks post-op
- Podiatry/physiotherapy review (arrange first appointment 2-5 days after 2-week post-op check)
- **REHAB - PODIATRY/PHYSIOTHERAPY:**
  - Joint mobilisation, soft tissue manipulation, calf releases, nerve desensitisation
  - Commence gentle active and passive ankle, midfoot and forefoot ROM exercises
  - Gait re-training
  - General upper body, core, hip and knee exercises

### 6 WEEK POST-OP APPOINTMENT

- Review by Dr Zilko

### WEEKS 7-12

- **PODIATRY/PHYSIOTHERAPY:**
  - Exercise bicycle +/- elliptical trainer
  - Continue lower limb strength and conditioning, progress to eccentric strengthening

### 12 WEEK POST-OP APPOINTMENT

- Review by Dr Zilko

### FROM 12 WEEKS

- **PODIATRY/PHYSIOTHERAPY:**
  - Work-specific or sport-specific training
  - Safe to commence open-chain impact/light jogging
  - Return to sport from 4-6 months post-op

Full recovery is usually 6-12 months.

*Every patient's recovery is individual and depends on the severity of the injury/disease and complexity of the surgery.*