



Tendonitis (of the foot)

What's the problem?

Tendonitis is inflammation of a tendon, a tissue that connects a muscle to its bone. The inflammation can occur after trauma, from overuse, or as a result of another medical problem such as arthritis or collagen vascular diseases. The inflammation puts pressure on the surrounding nerves, causing pain, and releases certain chemicals that damage the tendon, causing further pain and sometimes altering the structure of the tendon.

How does it feel?

Most patients feel an aching pain in the area of the inflammation. There may also be swelling and/or weakness of the involved tendon. The pain usually increases with an increase in activity levels.

How did this happen?

Tendonitis can develop in several ways. A common cause is overuse, usually occurring after an increase in your activity level, or from improper or inadequate stretching before a work out. Trauma to the foot such as an ankle sprain or medical problems such as arthritis may also cause tendonitis.

How is it diagnosed?

Your doctor will examine your foot, moving it through various motions to evaluate more specifically where the pain is coming from. She will look for areas of swelling and feel for lumps or gaps in the tendons. Your doctor may ask you to stand or walk so he can determine if your foot structure or walking pattern are affected by or causing the problem. If your doctor suspects tendon damage she may order special tests such as an X-ray, MRI, or ultrasound. If he suspects an underlying medical condition as the cause of tendonitis the doctor may order blood tests.

How can I care for myself?

In most cases, applying ice and taking Tylenol® or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication will relieve the pain. Keeping the foot elevated, decreasing your activity level for a couple of days, and wearing a compressive dressing such as an ace wrap will also help a great deal.

How will my doctor care for me?

If the pain continues, your doctor may send you for physical therapy, such as contrast bathes, ultrasound, massage, electrical stimulation, and/or stretching and strengthening exercises. You may need to start wearing custom made foot devices called orthotics. If the problem is caused by an underlying medical condition, your doctor may send you to a general practitioner or another medical specialist to treat the condition. In more severe cases, your doctor may recommend surgery to repair the tendon.

Disclaimer: This document contains information and/or instructional materials developed by the University of Michigan Health System (UMHS) for the typical patient with your condition. It may include links to online content that was not created by UMHS and for which UMHS does not assume responsibility. It does not replace medical advice from your health care provider because your experience may differ from that of the typical patient. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about this document, your condition or your treatment plan.

Author: Crystal Murray Holmes, DPM

Patient Education by [University of Michigan Health System](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#). Last Revised 01/2016