

*Castleknock GAA club member and Chartered Physiotherapist, James Sherry MISCP, has prepared an informative article on Achilles tendon injury and how best to treat this injury.*

*To book a physiotherapy appointment contact James on 087-7553451 or email [james\\_sherry8@hotmail.com](mailto:james_sherry8@hotmail.com)*

## **Achilles Tendon Injury:**

Swelling in the Achilles tendon is caused by overuse or trauma. Constant stress placed on the Achilles tendon causes irritation, inflammation and pain.

There are several factors that can lead to inflammation of the Achilles tendon:

- Overtraining
- Tiredness or increased stress levels
- Poor running technique (biomechanics)
- Reduced lower limb and core muscle strength
- Poor balance (proprioception)
- Poor flexibility
- Inadequate footwear
- Running on hard surfaces
- Running on a cambered road

If you notice swelling in your Achilles tendon, the initial treatment is **POLICE** – Prevent further damage, Optimal Loading, Ice, Compression, Elevation.

### **Preventing Further Damage:**

If your Achilles tendon is injured then the first thing to do is minimize the amount of further damage you do. The easiest way to do this is to stop or minimize any activities that cause your Achilles to swell up or get sore. Your Chartered Physiotherapist is fully qualified to determine the extent of the damage in your Achilles tendon and advise you on the appropriate management strategy to adopt.

An Achilles tendon injury can vary from complete rupture to a low grade inflammation. If you continue to run on an inflamed and injured Achilles tendon, you may put yourself at greater risk of an Achilles rupture. A complete rupture will require either surgery and a period of immobilization in a cast or a combination of both.

### **Optimal Loading:**

Seek advice from your Physiotherapist on what optimal loading for your Achilles is. This may vary from complete rest on crutches to continuing on with modified training in a pain free way, such as cycling, swimming, stretching and strength work.

### **Ice, Compression, Elevation:**

Inflammation can be reduced by icing, compressing and elevating your injured Achilles. Apply ice for 20 minutes every 2-3 hours during the initial phase. Ensure you use a towel or sheet placed in between the icepack and your skin to prevent ice-burns.

Your Chartered Physiotherapist can also use a combination of massage, taping, dry needling and exercise to decrease inflammation and improve recovery time from injury.

### **Rehabilitation Back to Full Training:**

Achilles tendon injuries are notoriously slow to heal and have a very high recurrence rate. Once your swelling has subsided and there is no pain on walking, your Physiotherapist will commence you on a rehabilitation programme to get you back to full training. Rehabilitation programmes consist of exercises to improve your leg and back flexibility and strength. These exercises will also help improve your running technique (biomechanics) and balance (proprioception) and are essential in decreasing the chances of the injury recurring.

Your Physiotherapist can assess your foot biomechanics and may also suggest changes in your footwear or temporary or permanent orthotics to decrease the work load on the Achilles tendon.

*Castleknock GAA club have set up a Chartered Physiotherapy service lead by James Sherry M.I.S.C.P. This clinic is open to all club members and takes place in the Castleknock Hotel every Saturday. Treatment sessions are available by appointment only. James specialises in the diagnosis and treatment of back and neck pain and sports injuries with over 10 years' experience working in private and public practice.*

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