

Patient Information Sheet

Achilles Tendon Tear

What do I need to know?

What is my diagnosis?

You have ruptured your achilles tendon – this is the main tendon that runs down the back of your leg to your heel. When it is torn you cannot stand on your tip toes.



What happens next?

- The tendon will heal by itself as long as it is supported in a special boot that raises the heel to bring the ends of the tendon together
- The boot should be worn day and night and should not be removed until you are seen in clinic.
- You will be sent an appointment to the Orthopaedic clinic within **2 weeks of injury**.

What can I expect during my recovery?

Weeks 1-8: Ankle supported by boot

- The back of your ankle/calf will be painful but simple painkillers will help
- Crutches will be useful for stability when walking
- You are allowed to put your full weight through the injured leg
- You will be given a blood thinning injection to limit the chance of clots in the leg
- You will be instructed on how to modify the boot to maximise healing but in general:
 - **Weeks 1-4:** There are 4 wedges in the boot
 - **Weeks 5 & 6:** 2 of the 4 wedges will be removed from your boot
 - **Weeks 7 & 8:** The last 2 wedges are removed so the foot is flat on the ground.

Week 9 onwards: boot removed and physiotherapy started

- The boot is removed after 8 weeks
- The blood thinning injections stop
- You will start physiotherapy to strengthen the calf
- There is **no specific time you can drive again**. It is **illegal** to drive when wearing a sling, splint, cast or moonboot. As you recover, it is your legal responsibility to be certain before you return to driving that you are able to control your vehicle normally and safely.

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What if my tendon does not heal?

- Almost all Achilles tendon tears heal, and patients return to all work and sporting activities.
- Occasionally the tendon does not heal correctly. If this happens you will be given advice from your Orthopaedic Consultant.

Top tips

- Elevate your leg above the level of your heart when you are at home to reduce swelling
- Keep your boot completely dry. If you suspect the skin on your heel is rubbing or sore, please call the advice line number
- Please use the QR code below to view a video on how to manage your boot.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=3AQ4Uo-wWRo>

Get in touch

Please get in touch via our trauma email if you have any queries about your injury:

traumaenquiriesRIE@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

Helpline Monday-Friday (8am – 4pm): 0131 242 3410

Urgent issues

Please call the department where you were initially seen about your injury:

- **RIE Minor Injuries Unit:** 0131 242 3942 (8am – midnight, if after midnight contact RIE Emergency Department 0131 242 1300)
- **WGH Minor Injuries Clinic:** 0131 536 3468 (9am – 8.30pm)
- **SJH Emergency Department:** 01506 523 011 (24 hours)

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