

Achilles Tendon Injury Exercises

Your healthcare provider may recommend exercises to help you heal. Talk to your healthcare provider or physical therapist about which exercises will best help you and how to do them correctly and safely.

You can do the towel stretch right away. When the towel stretch is easy, try the standing calf stretch, soleus stretch, and leg lift. When you no longer have sharp pain in your calf or tendon, you can do the step-up, heel raises, and static and balance and reach exercises.

- **Towel stretch:** Sit on a hard surface with your injured leg stretched out in front of you. Loop a towel around your toes and the ball of your foot and pull the towel toward your body keeping your leg straight. Hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds and then relax. Repeat 3 times.
- **Standing calf stretch:** Stand facing a wall with your hands on the wall at about eye level. Keep your injured leg back with your heel on the floor. Keep the other leg forward with the knee bent. Turn your back foot slightly inward (as if you were pigeon-toed). Slowly lean into the wall until you feel a stretch in the back of your calf. Hold the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds. Return to the starting position. Repeat 3 times. Do this exercise several times each day.
- **Standing soleus stretch:** Stand facing a wall with your hands on the wall at about chest height. Keep your injured leg back with your heel on the floor and the knee slightly bent. Turn your back foot slightly inward (as if you were pigeon-toed). Keep the other leg forward with the knee bent. Gently lean into the wall until you feel a stretch in the lower calf of your injured leg. Hold the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds. Return to the starting position. Repeat 3 times.
- **Side-lying leg lift:** Lie on your uninjured side. Tighten the front thigh muscles on your injured leg and lift that leg 8 to 10 inches (20 to 25 centimeters) away from the other leg. Keep the leg straight and lower it slowly. Do 2 sets of 15.
- **Step-up:** Stand with the foot of your injured leg on a support 3 to 5 inches (8 to 13 centimeters) high --like a small step or block of wood. Keep your other foot flat on the floor. Shift your weight onto the injured leg on the support. Straighten your injured leg as the other leg comes off the floor. Return to the starting position by bending your injured leg and slowly lowering your uninjured leg back to the floor. Do 3 sets of 15.
- **Eccentric calf strengthening:** Stand behind a chair or counter with your feet flat on the floor. Using the chair or counter as a support to help you, raise your body up onto your toes and hold for 5 seconds. Then slowly lower yourself down with your injured leg only. (It's OK to keep holding onto the support if you need to.) Repeat 15 times. Do 3 sets of 15. Rest 30 seconds between sets. When this exercise becomes easier, add resistance by holding weights in your hands or wearing a weighted backpack.
- **Balance and reach exercises:** Stand next to a chair with your injured leg farther from the chair. The chair will provide support if you need it. Stand on the foot of your injured leg and bend your knee slightly.
 - A. With the hand that is farther away from the chair, reach forward in front of you by bending at the waist. Avoid bending your knee any more as you do this.

Repeat this 15 times. To make the exercise more challenging, reach farther in front of you. Do 2 sets of 15.

- B. Reach the hand that is farther away from the chair across your body toward the chair. The farther you reach, the more challenging the exercise. Do 2 sets of 15.

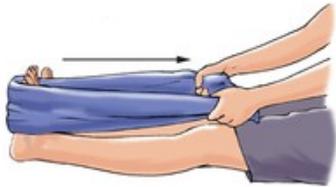
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Developed by Change Healthcare.

Published by Change Healthcare.

Produced in Cork, Ireland.

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Towel stretch



Standing calf stretch



Standing soleus stretch



Side-lying leg lift



Step-up



Eccentric calf strengthening



Balance and reach exercise A



Balance and reach exercise B

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