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Stretching Exercises

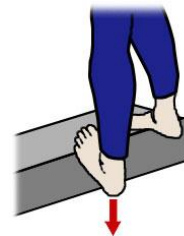
The Achilles tendon attaches the calf muscles to the calcaneus (heel bone). The tendon continues as a long band of fibers extending to the ball of the foot to support your arch, this is the plantar fascia. A tight Achilles tendon is a common problem among many people. It can be the cause of a number of secondary problems such as:

- Abnormalities in the way you walk
- Achilles tendonitis (inflammation of the tendon)
- Plantar fasciitis (heel pain)
- Flat foot (excessive pronation)

Stretching is a very important preventative and therapeutic modality. The following stretching exercises will increase the length of the tendon and may eliminate the risk of any associated secondary problems.

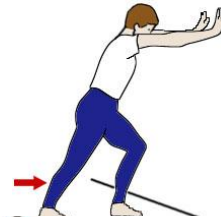
1. Step Stretch

Stand and face the stairs with both feet firmly planted on the last step and hold the handrails. Place the ball of one foot at the end of the step and push your heel downward until you feel a nice stretch in your calf. Hold for 20-30 seconds; then relax and switch to the opposite leg. Repeat this exercise 10 times for each side, 3 times a day



2. Wall Stretch

Stand at arms length from the wall with your back knee locked and your front knee bent. Slowly press forward by bending your arms until a moderate stretch is felt in the calf muscle of your straight leg. Keep both heels on the floor. Hold for 20-30 seconds. Switch legs and repeat. Repeat this exercise 10 times for each side, 3 times a day.



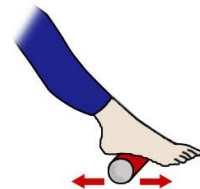
3. Towel Stretch

Roll a medium size towel lengthwise tightly. Place it around the ball of your foot with your knee straight. Pull the towel with both of your arms using even pressure until a moderate stretch is felt in the back of the calf muscle. Do 10 repetitions with your knee straight, then 10 with your knee bent, alternating legs, 3 times a day.



4. Bottle Stretch

Sit in a chair. Place a can or water bottle on the floor. Roll your foot slowly with even pressure from your heel to the ball of your foot, back and forth. Roll 20 times for each foot, 3 times a day.



5. Seated Stretch

Sit in a chair. Cross one leg over the other as shown. Grab hold of the big toe and bend it up. With the other hand apply even pressure to the bottom of the foot with the knuckles of your other hand. Begin at the heel and go towards your toes as shown.

