

## **Achilles Tendon Tears**

Tendon (the substance which joins muscle to bone) is a very resilient tissue, and very difficult to tear. It takes large forces to do so, & even then the tendon will be unlikely to tear unless it is already weakened by disease. It is also less likely in young patients - it tends to occur in middle-aged & older people.

Tears can be partial or complete. Partial tears may heal with a period of rest & unloading (such as in a cast or boot), followed by a period of progressive exercise. Complete tears will not heal fully unless surgically repaired. Repair is followed by a period of rehabilitation, and full recovery may take 6 months or longer.

The most common sports associated with tendon tears are the 'explosive' sports, where the athlete takes off suddenly, accelerates powerfully, or jumps and lands forcefully. These include tennis, squash, basketball & volleyball. The tear will cause a sudden pain in the tendon, and may even be accompanied by a popping or cracking sound. It may still be possible to walk on the leg after injury, as other muscles are still intact. However there will be weakness and a fair degree of disability. An experienced practitioner will be able to tell whether the tear is partial or complete, but scans may still be undertaken to allow a 'definitive diagnosis'.