

Achilles tendonitis exercises

Find the sorest spot first. Pain in the cord 2–6 cm above the heel bone is **midportion**: use Programme A. Pain right on the bone where the tendon attaches is **insertional**: use Programme B. Not sure? Start with B. Plan on about 12 weeks.

Programme A · Midportion: heel drops off a step

Step	What to do
Set up	Stand on the edge of a step on the balls of both feet, holding a rail. Heels hang free.
Lower	Rise on both feet, lift the good foot off, then lower slowly on the sore leg (about 3 seconds) until the heel is below the step.
Return	Come back up using both legs. The lowering is the exercise.
Dose	3 sets of 15 with the knee straight, then 3 sets of 15 with the knee slightly bent. Twice a day, every day, for 12 weeks. Add weight in a backpack when it gets easy.
Alternative	Heavier, slower calf raises (3 seconds up, 3 seconds down) three times a week, getting heavier over the 12 weeks, worked as well in a trial.

Programme B · Insertional: never drop below level

Step	What to do
If very irritable	Rise onto both toes, stop halfway, hold 30–45 seconds. Rest a minute. About 5 holds, once or twice a day.
Floor-level drops	On a flat floor, rise on both feet, shift onto the sore leg and lower slowly until the heel touches the floor. Never lower than the floor.
Dose	3 sets of 15, knee straight then slightly bent, twice a day. Add weight slowly once it is comfortable.
Heel lift	A small heel lift in both shoes while it settles. Skip stretches that hang the heel off a step. Shoes should not press on the sore spot.

The three pain checks, after every session. During: discomfort stays mild to moderate (about 5/10 at most). Next morning: stiffness is back to where it was. Week to week: steady or improving, not climbing. If one fails, reduce the load for a few days rather than stopping.

Back to running, in this order: (1) walking without a limp, (2) single-leg heel raises close to the good side, (3) gentle hops, (4) easy flat running every other day, (5) hills, speed and jumping last. Keep the exercises going through the return.

Do not exercise, get seen the same day if the pain started with a pop or snap, felt like a kick to the back of the leg, or you cannot rise onto tiptoe on that leg (possible rupture). Get checked promptly if the back of the heel is hot, red and swollen.

12-week tracker: tick each session

Week	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							