

Information about Peroneal Tendinopathy

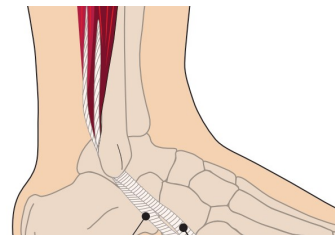
Peroneal Tendinopathy is a condition that often causes pain around the outside of the ankle or foot which eases with rest and worsens with activity such as walking, running and jumping. If left untreated it can lead to ankle instability.

What are the peroneal tendons?

The peroneals are muscles with tendons which travel down the outside of your lower leg, behind the bone on the outside of your ankle. The main function of your peroneals is to provide stability to your ankle when walking and prevent you going over on it causing an ankle sprain. If these muscles are weak or overused this can lead to your tendons having to work much harder.

Classic signs and symptoms:

Pain around the outside of the ankle - above, behind or below the outside ankle bone Tenderness along the main muscle belly, up the outside of your leg, to just below your knee.



What causes peroneal Tendinopathy?

It is thought to be caused by overuse which can lead to small injuries of the tendon fibres which can cause pain. Repetitive stress and small injuries cause the normal healing response of the soft tissue to slow resulting in injuries occurring within the tendon at a rate faster than the body can heal them. This can then lead to weakening of the tendon. A weakened tendon can be more vulnerable to injury. Weakness within the muscle puts more strain on the tendon.

Other Contributing factors

- Age - as we get older our tendons become weaker
- Being overweight
- Diabetes has been linked to increased risk of developing peroneal tendinopathy
- Inflammatory conditions i.e. rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis etc
- Weakness in the muscles within your feet or legs
- Tightness of the muscles in the backs of your legs
- Spending long periods standing, walking or running, especially with a sudden increase in these activities
- Wearing unsupportive footwear such as sandals
- Poor exercising or training techniques resulting in overloading or overuse of the peroneal muscles
- Not allowing adequate recovery time between activities
- Prolonged use of oral corticosteroids and antibiotics (Fluoroquinolones)
- Previous foot and ankle surgery/trauma
- High impact activity
- Smoking

What can I do to help?

There is no quick or easy fix and your symptoms will not improve overnight. The advice below is focused on helping you get back to normal activity. Most peoples' symptoms will improve but as tendons can be slow to heal, it may take several months to get better. The way in which you manage the load through the tendon will be key to the healing process. You must reduce the load by increasing the strength of the tendon and then gradually build up the muscle/tendon to get back to where you were previously before your symptoms. It is important to note that if you have any of the above contributing factors, you will need to consider making the necessary changes to your lifestyle to help aid your recovery. **The one person who can help you get better is you.**

Footwear

Changing Footwear to comfortable running style trainers/ shoe or hiking boots with a slight heel will provide the best support for your peroneals. Avoid wearing hard, flat or slip on footwear. Very flat shoes will aggravate your symptoms especially if you also have tight calf muscles. It is important to note that shoes that have flexible soles generally offer the foot less support and can increase the stress in the soft tissues of your foot and ankle. If your footwear has shoelaces makes sure they are tied appropriately.

Pain management

Analgesia also known as pain relief can be an important part in helping you manage your symptoms and allow you to stay active. Taking the right kind of pain relief regularly allows you to move more normally and continue your usual activities without causing any damage. Pain relief won't always stop your pain completely. For this reason we use the term pain relief (A 30-50% reduction in pain would be a good success). Pain relievers/ anti-inflammatory medications can be used as advised by your GP or Pharmacist. If you feel the ones you usually take are not helping your pain or you have any side effects from your medicines, please speak to your GP or pharmacist.

How you progress will vary from person to person depending on the injury. It is about finding the injured areas happy place and increasing slowly and gradually ☺

Ice may be used for reducing pain and swelling. Apply ice/frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel for 10- 20 minutes, 2-3 times per day for the first 5-7 days post injury ☺ Stop applying ice if there are any bad effects such as increase in pain or swelling or skin soreness ☺

Compression and Elevation are helpful for reducing inflammation and swelling. This can be done by keeping your sore area raised on a pillow and compressed by wrapping a bandage around it. Do not make the bandage too tight and do not wear tubi-grip or any compression bandage in bed at night

Should I use a heat pad?

After 2-3 days, you may find that heat is more relaxing. You could use a heat pad or a hot water bottle with an insulated cover on it. Make sure this is not too hot and is not directly touching your skin. You should do this for 10 to 15 minutes, 3 to 4 times a day.

Try to weight-bear, walking with a limp is generally normal in this phase, exercise can help relieve pain.

Do whatever you normally would and remain at work, or return to work. Avoid sports or heavy lifting until you have less discomfort and improved movement. If you are in pain do not try and do all your normal daily activities such as housework, at once.

Break the harder jobs down into smaller time frames and do something gentler in between. Extensive walking or standing should be avoided if it aggravates your pain. It is recommended to modify activities rather than to fully stop all forms of movement or exercise so try swimming or cycling instead of walking or running.

Avoid high impact activities like running which will significantly increase load through the affected tendon. We would encourage you to participate in low impact activities like walking, swimming, cycling etc.

What do i do if my symptoms flare up?

Flare ups of pain are common. This is when your pain suddenly becomes very bad for a time. Some people have a lot flare ups of pain so it is important to know how best to manage these flare ups. In most cases a pain flare-up will settle within 6 weeks.

TOP TIPS

You will likely find it helpful to rest a bit more but it is still important to keep active. This will help to avoid becoming stiff and your muscles becoming weak. Aim for a balance between rest and activity it should help your pain to settle down. You may be sore at first, however, start slowly and gradually increase the amount you do. Reduce movements or tasks that make your symptoms worse. This can help especially in the early days. Finding positions or movements that reduce your pain can be useful.

Smoking

Smoking can affect how your body recovers from musculoskeletal problems. If you smoke then the good news is that by stopping smoking it can improve your health in many different ways. Giving up smoking is not something you have to do on your own. You're twice as likely to stop smoking successfully if you get the right support from the NHS. There is a free NHS stop smoking service available in NHS Borders to help you succeed:

<https://www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/our-services/general-services/quit-your-way/>

Strengthening exercises

Two Leg heel raise:

Stand holding on to a kitchen worktop or back of a chair. Slowly push up on to your toes and then return to starting position. Stop if you feel ankle feels tired or shaky. Do this exercise up to 10 times and do this 3 times a day.

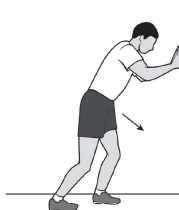
When you are comfortable on both legs, take the unaffected leg off the ground and work on single leg raises. Do this exercise up to 10 times and do this 3 times a day.



Sit on a dining chair. Wrap a belt around your foot and hold the ends of the belt in your opposite hand. Push your foot against the belt. Hold for a few seconds then release. Do this exercise up to 10 times and do this 3 times a day.



Stand facing a wall with your unaffected leg forward with a slight bend at the knee. Your affected leg is straight and behind you, with the heel flat and the toes pointed in slightly. • Keep both heels flat on the floor and press your hips forward toward the wall. • Hold this stretch for 30 seconds and then relax for 30 seconds. Repeat twice.



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Timescales

Have patience. There is no overnight cure for this condition. Most people with peroneal tendinopathy symptoms improve within 12 weeks of following the recommended advice. Unfortunately, not everyone will improve quickly and for some it could take six to nine months of focused rehabilitation to make a pain free return to full activities. Remember that it is normal to have periods of increased pain or flare ups during your recovery

When to contact?

If your pain has not started to improve after a period of 12 weeks of following the advice above.

If you begin to go over your ankle even more.

If your ankle is hot swollen and tender.

You can fill in the NHS Borders Podiatry self referral form from the website.

All Health Centres have a paper copy should you prefer.

Contact us: Podiatryadmin@borders.scot.nhs.uk or 01896 827427