Tendon Injury (Tendinopathy): Care Instructions

Your Care Instructions

Tendons are tough, flexible tissues that connect muscle to bone. A tendon can hurt or get torn from overuse or aging, especially tendons in the shoulder, elbow, wrist, hip, knee, or ankle. Tendon injuries may be called tendinopathy or tendinitis. Tendon injuries can occur from any motion you have to repeat in a job, sports, or daily activities. Tennis elbow is one common tendon injury.

You can treat most tendon problems with over-the-counter pain medicine, rest, changes in your activities, and physical therapy.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Rest the sore area. You may have to stop doing the activity that caused the tendon pain for a while.
- Take an over-the-counter pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve). Read and follow all instructions on the label.
- Do not take two or more pain medicines at the same time unless the doctor told you to. Many pain medicines have acetaminophen, which is Tylenol. Too much acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be harmful.
- Put ice or a cold pack on the sore area for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Try to do this every 1 to 2 hours for the next 3 days (when you are awake) or until any swelling goes down. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.
- Prop up the sore area on a pillow when you ice it or anytime you sit or lie down during the next 3 days. Try to keep it above the level of your heart. This will help reduce swelling.
- Follow your doctor's advice for wearing and caring for a sling, splint, or cast. In some cases, you may wear one of these for a while to help your tendon heal.

- Follow your doctor's advice for stretching and physical therapy. Gently move your joint through its full range of motion. This will prevent stiffness in your joint.
- Go back to your activity slowly. Warm up before and stretch after the activity. You also can try making some changes. For example, if a sport caused your tendon pain, alternate the sport with another activity. If using a tool causes pain, switch hands or change your grip. Stop the activity if it hurts. After the activity, apply ice to prevent pain and swelling.
- Do not smoke. Smoking can slow healing. If you need help quitting, talk to your doctor about stop-smoking programs and medicines. These can increase your chances of quitting for good.

When should you call for help?

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your pain gets worse.
- You do not get better as expected.

Where can you learn more?

Go to https://www.healthwise.net/patiented

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