

# What is a tendinopathy?

Tendinopathy refers to the injury of a tendon in the body. Tendons are mostly made up of a strong fibrous tissue, called collagen. The role of a tendon is to connect muscle to bone. Tendinopathy can affect people of all ages, of all activity levels. Common symptoms include swelling, stiffness and pain, which can be present during or after activity.

Affected tendons may become degenerative, weaker, or more swollen than usual, and have reduced ability to cope with activity.

Often, simply resting is not the best way to manage tendinopathy, and research has shown that physiotherapy and specific exercise can play a large role in the rehabilitation from these injuries



## What causes tendinopathy?

There are two main causes of tendinopathy:

1. Overuse: tendons are designed to take load, however, too much of a certain activity can cause an 'overload' on a tendon.
2. Compression: often, tendons do not cope with forces that repetitively compress the tendon

## The common tendinopathies and the activities which cause them:

- Achilles tendon (heel) - present in runners, usually distance runners more so than sprinters
- Patella tendon (knee) – sports that require a lot of jumping, including netball, basketball and netball
- Adductor tendon (groin): sports that require a lot of change of direction or kicking, such as AFL football and soccer
- Gluteal tendon (side of hip): middle age women are 5-6 times more likely to experience this than men
- Rotator cuff (shoulder): throwing and racquet sports, as

well as everyday activities that require repetitive overhead reaching or lifting

- Tennis elbow (outside of elbow): tennis players and occupations / hobbies that require repetitive gripping

## How physiotherapy can help:

The first step to managing your symptoms is to correctly diagnose the nature and cause. In many cases your physiotherapist will be able to do this with a thorough examination; in some cases radiological examination (MRI, ultrasound) may be required.

- Exercise: research has shown that specific exercise programs, prescribed by a physiotherapist, can help to reduce pain, return to activity and re-strengthen the tendon. For some tendinopathies, this includes 'eccentric' exercise – exercises that load the tendon, whilst it is lengthening at the same time.
- Taping: we can use specific taping techniques to 'off load' pressure from an injured tendon. In some cases braces may be used to replicate the use of the

tape. Taping/bracing can often help with decreasing recovery time and allowing a quicker return to sport, and prevention of any reoccurrences.

- Biomechanical assessment: often, alignment or muscle imbalances in the body can lead to inefficient movement patterns. These movement 'faults' can place unnecessary loads on tendons. Physiotherapists are experts at assessing and correcting these biomechanical problems.
- Modification of technique: physiotherapists can assess your running, jumping, hitting, or lifting techniques to make sure you are performing at the best of your ability and often the essential aspect to your rehabilitation.
- Advice on activity: we can help you to find the 'right' amount of activity for you during your rehabilitation period, and advise you on how to progress this over time

**What can I expect?**

The recovery time varies significantly depending on your injury area, the time it has been around and the ability to modify the causes to your problem.

Speak with your treating physiotherapist about your prognosis and likely rehabilitation time and options

**Your Problem is:**

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**Suggested /Planned Management:**

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**Specific Advice:**

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Physica Ringwood  
25 Wantirna Rd  
Ringwood Victoria  
Telephone 03 9017 5223  
Facsimilie 03 9879 7925  
physio@physica.com.au

Physica Devonport  
GP Superclinic  
8 Wenvoe St  
Devonport Tasmania 7310  
Telephone 03 6498 7600  
Facsimilie 03 6423 4452  
info@physica.com.au

Physica Devonport  
75 Best St  
Devonport Tasmania 7310  
Telephone 03 6424 7511  
Facsimilie 03 6424 7811  
info@physica.com.au

Physica Shearwater  
81 Club Drive  
Shearwater Tasmania 7307  
AUSTRALIA  
Telephone 03 6428 7720  
Facsimilie 03 6428 7736  
info@physica.com.au

Physica Latrobe  
45 Gilbert St  
Latrobe Tasmania 7307  
AUSTRALIA  
Telephone 03 6426 1111  
Facsimilie 03 6426 2629  
info@physica.com.au



www.physica.com.au

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## Helpful Hints

