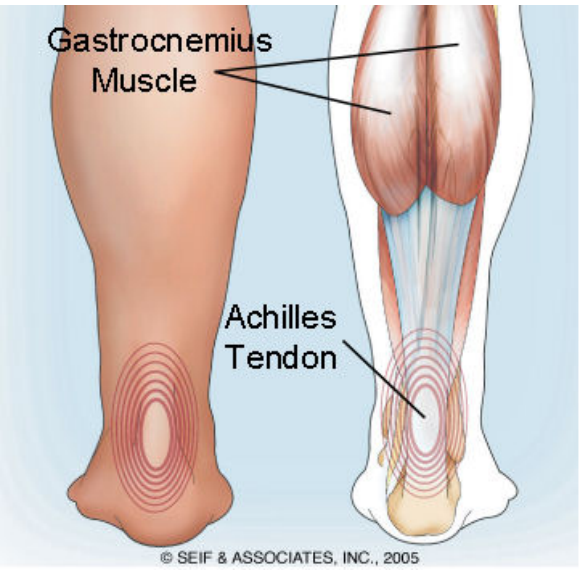
# Achilles Tendon Rupture (Complete), Care After Surgery

Tendons are the tough, fibrous, and stretchy (*elastic*) tissues that connect muscle to bone. The Achilles tendon is the large *tendon* (cord like structure) in the back of the leg just above the foot. It attaches the large muscles of the lower leg to the heel bone (*calcaneus*). You can feel this as the large cord just above the heel. The *diagnosis* (deciding what is wrong) of complete Achilles tendon tear (*rupture*) is made by examination (*clinically*). With this injury you are not able to stand up on the toes of the injured foot. Special x-rays will determine the extent of the damage (*injury*). With complete rupture of the tendon, surgical repair with casting or splinting is necessary. Surgery allows the surgeon to put the tendon back together. The cast is used to allow the repair time to heal. The injury may be casted or immobilized for 6 to 10 weeks. Immobilization means that the injured tendon is kept in position with a cast or splint. Once your caregiver feels you have healed well enough following this injury, they will provide exercises you can do to help heal (*rehabilitate*) the injured tendon.




## HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETE TEARS, IF ALLOWED TO GO HOME FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS PRIOR TO SURGERY

- **Apply ice** to the injury for 10 to 20 minutes, 3 to 4 times per day. Put the ice in a plastic bag. Place a towel between the bag of ice and your skin, splint or immobilization device.
- **Use crutches** and move about only as instructed.
- **Keep leg elevated** above the level of the heart (the center of the chest) at all times when not using bathroom etc. Do not dangle the leg over a chair, couch or bed. When lying down, elevate your leg on a couple pillows.
- **Elevation** prevents swelling and reduces pain.
- Try to **avoid use** of your leg other than gentle range of motion of toes.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.

## SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION IF:

- Your pain and swelling increase or pain is uncontrolled with medications.
- You develop new, unexplained symptoms or an increase of the symptoms, which brought you to your caregiver.
- You develop an inability to move your toes or foot.
- You develop warmth and swelling in your foot.
- You begin running an unexplained temperature.

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