

THOSE DREADED ACHILLES ACHES AND PAINS USUALLY MEANS SOMETHING IS BREWING, WRITES **MARK BUCKINGHAM**

**H**OW to treat Achilles injuries depends on where the pain is. The pain is usually felt more to the inside of the tendon (see pic 1). An injured tendon will be sore to poke, so compare to see if you have found the right part. There may be a spot of thicker, fibrous tissue. These types of Achilles issues can be due to tearing or an over-loading of the tendon. If it is only a few days old then please rest and ice. If it is longer than a couple of weeks then start to work the strength of the calf and Achilles with heel rises or eccentric lowering.

Eccentric lowers have been in favour recently due to some good research. This is where you rise up on two feet on the edge of a step, shift your weight to the affected leg and then lower fully (3x15 reps adding weight to around 20kg as you are able).

This approach, however, is not helpful for issues that are lower on the heel where the Achilles attaches. It attaches over a large area of the back of the heel and, when the foot is pulled up, the heel bone is pushed into the Achilles. If you have damage to the tendon at this point (see pic 2) and you attempt the eccentric exercises described above, you will potentially irritate the injured

# Your Achilles heel



**Pic 1:** Pain here is felt more to the inside of the tendon and will be sore to poke

site. In these cases only do the eccentric lowers on to the flat and not over the edge of a step.

If you have pain in the area which is further to the side of the heel (see pic 3), this indicates that you have inflammation in the bursa.

This is a fluid-filled sac that sits between the Achilles and the heel bone to absorb the friction and it and the tendon can become inflamed and damaged – sometimes on its own or sometimes with other tendon issues. If you suspect it is a bursa, almost all heel rise exercises will

cause irritation. Ice and rest is a better option to begin with.

If you have a very bony heel (see pic 4), you may have a Haglund's deformity and this is where you grow extra bone in response to loading or even just genetics.

These can be difficult to settle down, because each step that you take, you are pushing bone into the tendon.

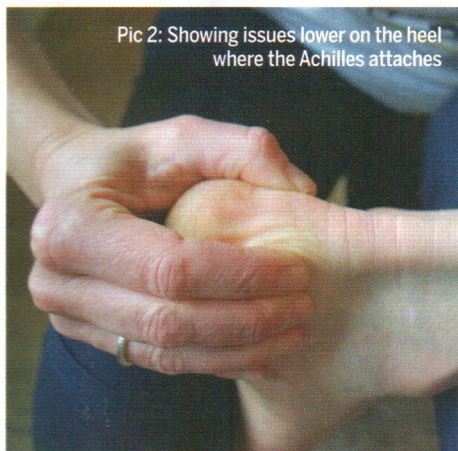
For these issues you must seek expert advice and avoid pressing on with any exercises while there is pain as you will just continue to damage the tendon.

• Witty, Pask and Buckingham Physiotherapists have 17 years of working with the UK's elite runners at Olympic Games, world and European championships for UK Athletics, as well as all standards of runners from around the country.

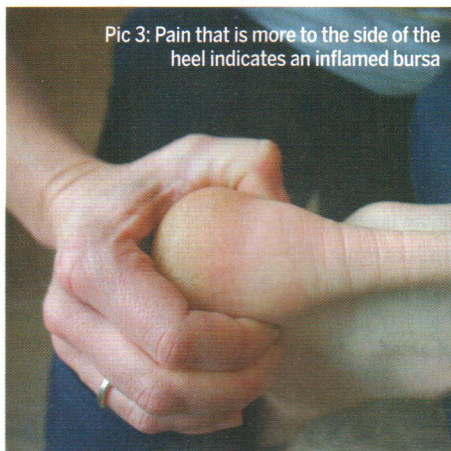


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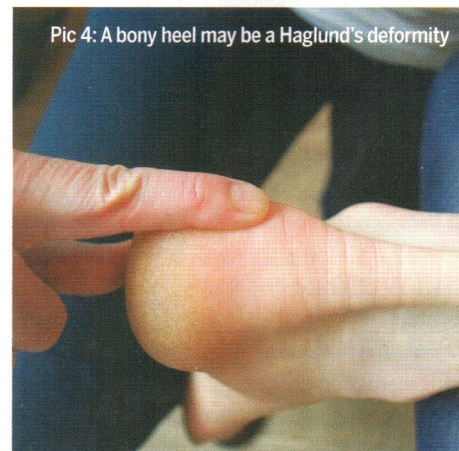
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**Pic 2:** Showing issues lower on the heel where the Achilles attaches



**Pic 3:** Pain that is more to the side of the heel indicates an inflamed bursa



**Pic 4:** A bony heel may be a Haglund's deformity