

What is it?

A big tendon called the Achilles tendon joins the calf muscle at the back of the leg to the heel. Sever's disease is thought to occur because the growth area where the Achilles muscle tendon attaches to the bone (the apophysis) is 'active', which means it is beginning to transition from cartilage to bone.

During this phase, active pre-teens can get pain at the attachment area, and in the tendon and heel bone itself. Sever's disease most commonly affects boys aged ten to 12 years and girls aged nine to 11 years, when growth spurts are beginning.

Symptoms:

- Pain and stiffness at the heel or around the Achilles tendon, often after a non-weight-bearing period (such as sleeping, or working at a desk for a period of time)
- Heel pain during physical exercise, especially activities that require running or jumping
- Worsening of pain after exercise
- A tender swelling or bulge on the heel that is sore to touch
- Limping – often in the morning, or during or after sport
- A tendency to tiptoe

Common Causes?

- Sports and activities that are weight bearing, such as sports that involve running or jumping or both, such as football, netball, running and gymnastics
- Change in type of physical activity – such as starting a different activity or returning to a physical activity after a break
- Change in amount of physical activity – this may be an increase in volume, intensity or frequency of activity
- Incorrect footwear such as changing to shoes with a low heel (such as football boots or some types of running shoes), doing a sport in bare feet, or even walking at the beach in thongs/flip flops
- Poor foot biomechanics

Treatment

- Education on how to self-manage the symptoms and flare-ups of Sever's disease
- Load management – this may initially include a period of decreased or modified load
- Avoiding stretches and eccentric exercises (such as lowering your heel over a step or jumping or hopping) in the initial phase
- Calf massage
- Orthotics to correct any biomechanical issues, ie: reduce the abnormal loading of the Achilles tendon as well as to cushion the heels
- Footwear advice

For further information on your foot health or to discuss treatment options with a podiatrist, please contact your local ModPod Podiatry clinic.