

Tendinopathy (Tendonitis)

This condition used to be referred to as tendonitis. A tendon is an anatomical structure that connects a muscle to a bone. At one point we thought that overuse of the tendon would cause inflammation. We now understand that this is not the case. **Tendinopathy** occurs with overload of the tendon and causes degeneration. This results in scarring, which changes the architecture of the tendon, and affects how the tendon functions.

A tendinopathy can occur in two ways. The first is a discrete injury, such as a fall or a laceration. The other is repetitive activity which exceeds the tensile strength of the tendon causing scarring. Healthcare providers sometimes refer to tendinopathy as a sprain as opposed to a muscle injury (known as a strain, see discussion below). Pain from a tendon is usually described as a dull ache, and it is made worse with activity. It is relieved by rest. This type of discomfort usually lasts a number of weeks.

Contrary to popular belief, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, also known as NSAIDs, provide pain relief but do not help these injuries to heal. We recommend treating these conditions with rest and application of ice for approximately 20 minutes intermittently. Over-the-counter medications such as ibuprofen or Tylenol can help with discomfort but should not be used for a regular or long-term basis without consulting a healthcare provider.