

SEVER'S DISEASE

If you're a young basketballer/netballer/footballer and have heel pain when playing basketball or sports involving running or jumping, you may have a particular growth pain disorder called Sever's Disease.

What is Sever's Disease?

It is a condition (not a disease) usually affecting 9-15 year olds that occurs at the back of the heel, where the Achilles tendon attaches to the foot. The Achilles tendon is the tendon connected to the calf muscles. Pulling of the calf muscles results in tension in the Achilles and in adolescents, repeated running/jumping can result in pain and inflammation at the heel - this is called Sever's Disease.

Why does it happen?

Sever's disease is often associated with a growth spurt, when the bones grow but the muscles do not. Therefore the muscles effectively become tighter which results in increased stress at the heel. It may also be related to unusual biomechanics, for instance poor foot posture, muscle tightness or muscle weakness. Overtraining or incorrect training can also play a part. Usually, the cause is a combination of factors.

What will the physiotherapist do?

The physiotherapist will thoroughly assess the affected areas and general mechanics to determine what factors may be contributing, also to rule out any other injuries or stress fractures, etc. Treatment focusing on the affected area will consist of modified rest, ice, massage, stretches and electrotherapy. A foam heel raise may also be given to help decrease pain.

The physiotherapist may also treat other areas if biomechanical problems are noted. This may include massage, mobilization and exercises to stretch and strengthen certain areas. They may also refer the patient to see a podiatrist if they believe the foot posture is a factor.

What about sport?

The term relative rest is often used. It is difficult to quantify an amount of activity because everybody is different and does different amounts and levels of sport. Pain-free activity is important for recovery. This usually means decreasing the number of sports played or the amount of training. Complete rest is rarely required.

Outcome

Sever's Disease will settle, usually within six weeks to 12 months, but symptoms may persist for as long as two years, especially if you do not manage the condition properly.

