



## SEVER'S DISEASE

Sever's disease is a cause of heel pain in childhood and early adolescence. The pain comes from repeated running and jumping which leads to small areas of repetitive damage in the place where the calf muscle tendon (the Achilles tendon) attaches to the heel bone. It is one of a group of conditions called apophysitis. Apophysitis is irritation and swelling of an apophysis. This is where a tendon attaches to a growing part of a bone (growth plate).

The pain often occurs in children who are active, particularly in those who take part in running and jumping sports. The child may limp and complain of pain during or after activity; the child may also at times walk on their tip-toes to prevent themselves from experiencing the pain. There may also be a lump on the heel bone at times. The reason that the tendon can become tight in this way is because the bones grow faster than the muscles and this why it is more common during rapid growth phases.

Sever's disease generally affects boys between the age of 8-10 years old and girls between the age of 10-12 years old. Often the child is having a growth spurt and the child is involved in sport. There is no specific treatment for Sever's disease, but it is important if there are concerns to have a check-up with a Doctor to confirm that this is the diagnosis, and appropriate history and examination will be carried out and generally special tests or x-ray are not needed.

Sever's disease usually resolves itself but, it can take some time for the symptoms to resolve completely, at times up to 2-3 years. It will stop when the child has finished growing. However, there are things that can be done to relieve and improve the symptoms.

The following things can help:

- rest, so reducing the amount of time a child is playing sport, until the pain has gone
- avoiding sports that involve lots of running and jumping.
- ice on the affected area for 10-15 minutes a day especially after activity.
- Simple pain relief can help to reduce pain or swelling.
  - Options for this would need to be discussed with a Pharmacist, GP or Consultant managing the child.
- inserting gel heel pads into the shoes
- wearing shoes the majority of the time rather than doing activities in bare feet.
- physiotherapy
- Gentle stretching of the calf muscle for 30 seconds up to three times a day.

In most cases Severs disease will go away on its own with rest and time. Ignoring the pain and playing through it, however, will not necessarily help the condition to improve and may make the pain worse and more difficult to treat. Once the pain has gone a slow return to previous levels of activity is recommended and with future growth spurts it is recommended that stretches are maintained. If all of these are not successful in reducing the pain then consideration can be given to immobilising the joint for a period of time. This would be best done under the supervision of a Paediatric Orthopaedic Specialist.