

Heel raise

The addition of a heel raise in a shoe can help to ease some of the pulling on the heel bone, however if a heel raise is used stretching becomes even more important to prevent the tendon shortening.

Medication

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication may be prescribed by the GP to reduce swelling and pain.

Insoles

If the child has flat feet and tends to walk on the inside of the feet they may benefit from insoles. These fit in shoes and support the foot.

Severs is self-limiting and will go away when the 2 areas of bone growth join together, usually around the age of 15 years.

There are no long-term problems associated with Severs disease.

Your local NHS podiatry service

For more information about NHS Podiatry in Hertfordshire please visit our webpage at: [ct www.hct.nhs.uk](http://www.hct.nhs.uk)

or contact:

Hertfordshire Podiatry Service

Sandridge Gate Business Park
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If you wish to see a private practitioner, we recommend practitioners who are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council and who describe themselves as a podiatrist or chiropodist. These are protected titles in law and may only be used by persons who are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.

For more information visit: www.hpc-uk.org

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Severs Disease

What you should look for



Severs disease is the most common cause of heel pain in children.

It tends to occur between the ages of 10 to 14 and is due to damage or disturbance to the growing area at the back of the heel.

The foot is one of the first body parts to grow to full size usually occurring during puberty. During this time, bones often grow faster than muscles and tendons. This can lead to stretching or tightening of the calf muscle and Achilles tendon, and pulling to the area where it attaches to the heel bone.

What causes Severs Disease?

The cause of severs disease is not entirely clear. Some children are more prone to it. Sporting activity increases the risk of the disease occurring. A tight calf muscle will also put more strain on the tendon at the back of the heel where it attaches to the bone. Children are most at risk from this condition when they are in the early part of a growth spurt in early puberty. Some children who have Severs also have flat feet and walk on the inside of the foot, as shown in the diagram. This can increase the pull on the tendon at the back of the heel.

Severs disease rarely occurs in older teenagers because the back of the heel has finished growing by the age of 15.

Signs and symptoms

Pain is usually felt at the back and side of the heel bone. In some cases it may also occur under the heel. The pain usually starts with sport or an increase in exercise and disappears when the child is not active. One or both heels can be affected.

Treatments for Severs Disease

Rest

Reducing sporting activity and stopping when the heel becomes painful is very important. In a few severe cases no sport is recommended due to the level of pain experienced.

Ice

Applying ice after activity or at the end of the day will help reduce swelling and make the heel more comfortable the next morning. One method is to fill a plastic drinks bottle with water and freeze it. This is then placed under the heel and arch of the foot and rolled backwards and forwards for 5 to 10 minutes.



Stretches

Regular stretching of the Achilles tendon and calf muscle helps ease symptoms. This is because most people with Severs have a slight tightness of the calf and tendon. This tends to pull at the back of the heel.

The aim of the stretches is to loosen up the tendons and fascia above and below the heel.



Stand 60 to 90 cm away from a wall. Keeping the knees straight and the heels on the ground, lean into the wall.

You should feel the calf muscles and the Achilles tendon tighten.

Hold this position for 20 seconds then relax.

Do this 5 times. Repeat this routine 2 or 3 times a day. If the stretch is painful do not lean as far towards the wall.

Footwear

Always wear shoes. Avoid high heels, slip-ons or heavy shoes. Choose a shoe with a thick cushioned sole as impact on the heel during walking increases the pain.