

Child health information factsheet

Severs disease

Severs disease is pain in one or both heels when walking.

The pain comes from the area between the sections of bone that make up the heel.

As you go through a 'growth spurt' the tendon at the back of the heel (Achilles tendon) pulls at the heel bone. This makes you limp or walk on your toes and often creates a lump on your heel.



The reason the tendon is tight is because your bones grow faster than your muscles.

It usually affects:

- Boys between eight to ten years old
- Girls between ten and 12 years old
- Children in a 'growth spurt'
- Children involved in sports, usually those that involve running and jumping.

How to help

There is nothing you can do to stop severs disease. It will stop when you finish growing. However the following will help to relieve the symptoms.

Rest

- Cut down on the time you spend playing sport until the pain has gone
- Avoid sports that involve a lot of running or jumping
- Swimming can be a useful alternative.

Ice

- Ice the affected area for ten to 15 minutes, especially after activity
- Make sure you protect the skin by wrapping the ice in a towel.

Elevation

- Elevate (raise) the leg when painful and swollen especially after sports.

Pain relief

- Pain relieving medication may reduce pain and swelling, but you need to discuss options with a pharmacist or GP.

Always wear shoes

- Avoid activities in bare feet. Choose a supportive shoe with the laces done up.

Stretch your calf muscles



- Hold the stretches for 30 seconds three times a day
- Make sure your foot faces forward and you repeat the exercise with your back leg straight (a) then bent (b).

Getting better

It may take several weeks or months for the pain to completely stop. In most cases severs disease goes away on its own with a little rest and time.

However if you ignore the pain and play through it, the condition may get worse and may be more difficult to treat.

When the pain is completely gone, you can slowly return to your previous level of activity.

With future growth spurts the pain may return therefore keep up with the stretches and follow the advice given.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact

The paediatric physiotherapy department, B level, west wing,
Southampton General Hospital: **023 8079 4560**

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023 8079 4688 for help.**