

## *Recovery*

One of the most important things to know about Sever's disease is that, with proper care, the condition usually goes away within 2 weeks to 2 months and does not cause any problems later in life. Most children can return to physical activity without any trouble once the pain and other symptoms go away.

The risk of recurrence goes away on its own when foot growth is complete and the growth plate has fused to the rest of the heel bone, usually around age 15.

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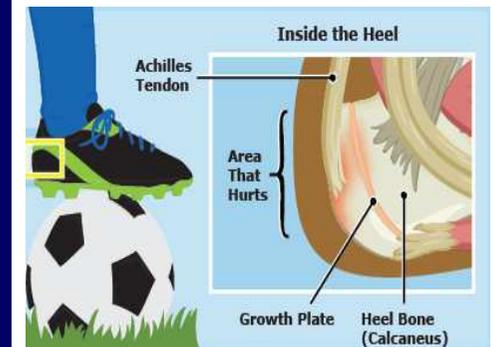
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# Patient Information Leaflet



## Sever's Disease



**THE ADELAIDE & MEATH  
HOSPITAL, DUBLIN**  
INCORPORATING THE NATIONAL CHILDRENS  
HOSPITAL

### *What is Sever's disease?*

Although the name might sound pretty frightening, Sever's disease is really a common heel injury that occurs in young people. It can be painful, but is only temporary and has no long-term effects

The condition occurs most commonly in children between the ages of 8 and 14 years but it can occur in younger children. It happens when the attachment of the Achilles tendon to the growth plate, becomes inflamed and causes pain.

### *The main factors that contribute to Sever's disease are:*

- Sports & physical activity
- Growth spurts

### *What are the symptoms of Sever's disease?*

- Activity-related pain that occurs on the back of the heel, where the Achilles tendon attaches on to the heel bone
- Tenderness, pain & swelling on the heel bone
- Difficulty walking or walking with a limp or on tiptoes

### *What causes Sever's disease?*

During the growth spurt of early puberty, the heel bone sometimes grows faster than the leg muscles and tendons. This can cause the muscles and tendons to become very tight and overstretched, making the heel less flexible and putting pressure on the growth plate. The Achilles tendon is the strongest tendon that attaches to the growth plate in the heel.

Over time, repeated stress, from physical activities and sports, on the Achilles tendon damages the growth plate, causing the swelling, tenderness, and pain of Sever's disease.



### *How is Sever's disease diagnosed?*

Sever's disease is based on the symptoms reported. To confirm the diagnosis, the clinician will examine the heels and ask about the child's activity level and participation in sports. They may also squeeze the back part of the heel from both sides at the same time to see if doing so causes pain and also ask the child to stand on tiptoes to see if that position causes pain. There may be tightness in the calf muscle, which contributes to tension on the heel. Symptoms are usually worse during or after activity and get better with rest.

X-rays generally are not that helpful in diagnosing Sever's disease, but they may be ordered to rule out other problems, such as fractures. Sever's disease cannot be seen on an X-ray.



### *How can we treat Sever's Disease?*

**Rest:** Rest is best to allow healing. Only do as much exercise as able without causing pain. Many children can continue to play sports but if pain is severe then stopping the activity may be the only way to allow the pain to settle. The child might be able to do things that do not put pressure on the heel, such as swimming and cycling.

**Ice:** ice and cold therapy may be useful to reduce pain and swelling, particularly following activity or sport. The area should be iced until it feels cold not 'frozen'. Never apply ice directly onto the skin, as this may cause tissue damage.

### **Medication:**

The following will help treat your child's pain:  
Paracetamol (see bottle for instructions)  
Ibuprofen (see bottle for instructions).

### **Exercises:**

**Exercises:** perform foot and leg exercises to stretch and strengthen the leg muscles & tendons.

Increase calf flexibility by doing calf stretches several times per day.

**Protect the heel:** your shoes might need a heel lift or arch support. Select a shoe with good arch support and heel lift if possible.

**Take it one step at a time:** gradually resume running and impact activities as symptoms allow.