

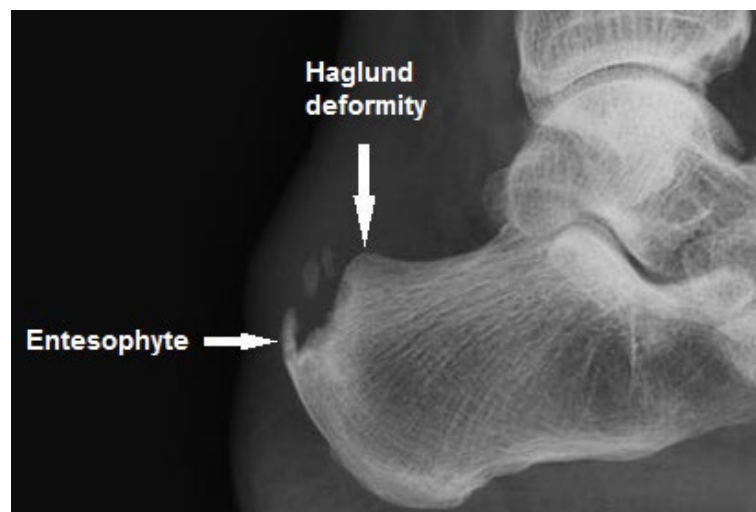
Surgery for insertional Achilles tendinopathy

This leaflet explains what surgery involves and outlines what to expect before, during and after your operation.

What is insertional Achilles tendinopathy?

The Achilles tendon (or heel cord) is the largest tendon in the human body. It connects the calf muscles to the heel (calcaneus). Insertional Achilles tendinopathy is degeneration / inflammation of the fibres of the tendon directly where it attaches (insertion) to the heel bone. It may be associated with inflammation of a fluid-filled sac (bursa) or tendon itself.

There may be a bony enlargement on the back of the heel (Haglund deformity) which can cause irritation. The soft tissue near the Achilles tendon becomes irritated when the bony enlargement rubs against shoes. This often leads to painful bursitis (inflammation of the bursa). In some patients X-rays may show calcification deposits within the tendon at its insertion into the heel (entesophyte).



Why is surgery necessary

In the majority of patients, non-surgical treatment remains effective with the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs/ gels, heel lifts, stretching and shoes that do not provide pressure over this area. Cortisone injections are not recommended for the treatment of these types of problems because they can weaken the tendon and make it easier to rupture. However, if bursitis (inflammation of bursa) is the main pain generator, a one-off cortisone injection into the bursa might be considered.

Surgical treatment is recommended if there is failure of several months of non-surgical treatment. Several different approaches and techniques, including endoscopy (camera/tools on a flexible tube), are used to achieve these goals.

What type of surgery is suitable for me?

The extent of inflammation and whether you have calcification within the tendon decides the type of surgery. Your surgeon would perform either:

- 1) Resection of Haglund deformity and bursa: This procedure is undertaken when you have a Haglund deformity and bursitis (Haglund syndrome) with minimal / no calcification within the tendon.
- 2) Resection of entesophyte (the bony enlargement) including partial detachment and reattachment of tendon: This procedure is undertaken when you have calcification within the tendon. It involves having to detach part of the tendon off the heel bone and reattaching it once the calcification has been removed. If you have a Haglund deformity, this will also be removed.

The best surgical technique for your Achilles rupture will be determined by your foot and ankle orthopaedic surgeon.

How is the operation done?

You will be admitted on the day of operation. The operation takes around 45-60 minutes and is routinely done under a general anaesthetic (you are asleep). Occasionally a spinal anaesthetic (you are awake but the area is numbed and you may be drowsy) may be considered. Most patients go home the same day.

1. Resection of Haglund deformity and bursa: The removal of the Haglund deformity and bursa can be done endoscopically ('keyhole' operation) or open surgery, depending on the extent of involvement. In the 'keyhole' operation, two keyhole incisions are made on either side of the tendon and the bone and bursa are removed using 'keyhole' instruments. In the open technique, a small incision (4-5 cm) is made on one side of the tendon to allow surgical access for the procedure. Following surgery, a bulky dressing (bandage), boot or back slab plaster is applied to protect the ankle. Weight-bearing and type of immobilisation is dictated by the extent of surgery on the tendon. Most patients would be able to partial weight-bear immediately following surgery. As the tendon does not need to be detached from the heel bone, recovery is quicker.
2. Resection of entesophyte including partial detachment and reattachment of tendon: A single incision (5-6 cm) centred over the tendon insertion is made. The Achilles tendon is partially detached off the bone. Part of the diseased tendon is removed. The calcification within the tendon and Haglund deformity is removed using surgical instruments. The tendon is then re-attached to the bone using bone anchors.
Following surgery, a back slab plaster is applied. You will be non-weight bearing on the operated leg for at least two weeks. After two weeks, you will be allowed to increase your weight bearing on the operated leg over a period of six weeks. You will be using a boot / plaster cast during this stage.
3. Zadek calcaneal osteotomy: Realignment of the heel bone to reduce pain and prominence. A curved incision is made on the side of the heel, a wedge of bone is removed and the heel bone is secured with a screw. Following surgery, a backslab plaster is applied. You will be non-weight bearing on the operated leg for two weeks. After two weeks, you will be placed in a boot and allowed to partially weight bear,

After the operation

It is important to keep the leg elevated as much as possible especially for the first two weeks. You will usually be able to go home when you feel ready. You will need to arrange for someone to drive you home. You should try to have a friend or relative stay with you for the first 24 hours. Your first clinic follow-up appointment is usually 12-14 days after surgery.

Wound care – The bandage / backslab should be kept dry. At your first clinic appointment, wound inspection and suture removal would be undertaken.

Work – If you have a sedentary job you should be able to return to work within 2 weeks (if you can arrange safe transport). If your job is physical, you may need to stay off work until the boot / cast is removed.

What risks are there involved in the procedure?

- Infection.
- Nerve damage – causing numbness and painful scar.
- Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE) – blood clots in the vein or lungs.
- Non-union (bone not healing) – Zadek calcaneal osteotomy cases.
- Prolonged swelling and stiffness.
- Prolonged recovery.
- Residual pain.

It is beyond the scope of this document to identify all the most extreme (less than one in a thousand) risks that you might be prone to but we will be very happy to discuss any worries about specific concerns and also about any family history or your own personal history of problems in the past which are much more relevant. If there is anything you do not understand or if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to discuss them with your doctor or nurse.

Useful numbers and contacts

Adult Day Surgery Unit:	0118 322 7622
Redlands Ward:	0118 322 7484 / 7485
Pre-operative Assessment:	0118 322 6546
Occupational Therapy	0118 322 7560
Physiotherapy	0118 322 7812

Any concerns you may have during the first 24 hours following your discharge from hospital please telephone the ward you were on. After 24 hours please contact your GP.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Trauma & Orthopaedics, March 2023. Next review due: March 2025