**Extensor Tendonitis**

**Overview**

Extensor tendons are in your hands and feet. The extensor tendons in your hands help you move your fingers, thumbs, and wrists. The extensor tendons in your feet attach the muscles at the front of your legs to the toes and run across the top of your feet with very little padding to protect them from a variety of injuries. These tendons have an important job and are in vulnerable locations.

If you’ve been diagnosed with extensor tendonitis, an inflammation of the tendons, in your feet, it’s likely because you spend a lot of time on your feet or wearing shoes that are too tight. If you have extensor tendonitis in your hands, it’s usually due to excessive use of the tendons in a short amount of time, or from sports or other activities that use the wrists.

There are many simple solutions that can relieve extensor tendonitis symptoms, as well as some more involved therapies to treat this common injury.

**Symptoms**

The main symptom of foot extensor tendonitis is pain on the top of your foot. The discomfort is usually felt around the midpoint of the dorsal (top) of the foot. You may experience extensor tendonitis in both feet, but often only one foot is affected. The pain usually builds gradually as use of the injured tendon continues.

The tendons may also become weaker. This weakness can affect your ability to move your toes or to push off from your toes when you jump, dance, or run. Running or simply being on your feet for an extended period of time may make the pain worse.

Extensor tendonitis in your hand causes pain and stiffness in the top of your hand, often around the wrist. You may also feel numbness or tingling in this area.

**Causes**

Foot tendons can be irritated if they rub against shoes that are too tight. If you run and your running shoes or laces are pressing too hard against the tendons, the tendons can become inflamed. Overuse can also cause foot extensor tendonitis. Running uphill is a common culprit.

Inflammation in the hand is usually caused by overuse. For example, a major landscaping or home improvement project that requires excessive work with your hands can strain the tendons. Sports that involve a lot of throwing or other wrist action can tax the tendons, as well. You may be at greater risk for an injury if the muscles and tendons in your hand aren’t used to a lot of work.

**Diagnosis**

If you experience pain in the top of your foot but it goes away after a day or so of rest, it may be a case of mild inflammation. If the pain lingers for days and is made worse when you are active or wear certain shoes, you should contact your doctor.

Extensor tendonitis is a fairly common condition, so your primary care physician or a doctor at a walk-in clinic may be able to diagnose your problem. You may also need to see a podiatrist, a doctor who specializes in feet, or an orthopaedist, a doctor who specializes in foot and ankle injuries.

At the appointment, your doctor will ask you about your symptoms and do a physical examination. Sometimes an X-ray may be done to make sure there are no fractures causing your pain. In serious cases, other imaging tools may be used. These include ultrasound and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), which provide detailed views of tendons, muscles, and other soft tissue. These other screenings can be helpful in making sure no other tendons or muscles are injured, or to identify other areas of the foot that might need medical attention.

**Treatment**

Resting the sore tendons is recommended for both hand and foot extensor tendonitis. Icing the area may also ease the symptoms of inflammation.

You may also want to use nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) to help relieve the pain.

Stretching and strengthening exercises are the main ways to regain tendon strength and flexibility, as well as a healthy range of motion. Calf stretches can help tendons in the feet. Tight calves can cause more strain to be placed on the extensor tendons.