



Lexington Clinic

Shoulder Center of Kentucky



USTAKY December 2021 Ask the Doc Article:
Tennis Leg

Question:
What is “Tennis Leg”?

Answer:
Classically, the term was used to describe a plantaris rupture. The plantaris is a small muscle that starts in the back of the knee and runs under the gastrocnemius (large calf muscle) attaching the calcaneus (heel bone) just inside the Achilles tendon. It plays a small role in ankle plantar flexion. Injury to this muscle occurs with a hard dorsiflexion force (foot going up towards the shin) and a feeling/hearing of a pop can be associated.

More recently, this term can also be used to describe a medial gastrocnemius (big calf muscle) or soleus (calf muscle under the gastrocnemius) strain. These large muscles of the calf will not pop, but injuries can result in significant pain and dysfunction.

For pain in this area without an injury, you should contact a physician as this could be a deep vein thrombosis (blood clot of the leg).

Treatment for tennis leg is primarily focused on decreasing pain, stretching, and regaining strength. A walking boot can help to keep the ankle from pushing down which requires calf activation. Stretching the calf muscles, with the knee extended (plantaris and gastrocnemius) and the knee flexed (soleus). Compression, icing and anti-inflammatories may help decrease discomfort and swelling. There should be no pain with walking before considering running, jumping and more athletic maneuvers.

Please review the following stretches to help address soreness in the calf muscle.

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“Tennis Leg” Exercises

12.13.21

Standing Straight Knee Calf Stretch



Stand with left foot back, leg straight, forward leg bent. Keeping left heel on floor and foot pointing straightforward, lean into wall until stretch is felt in calf. Hold 60 seconds.

Repeat 2 times per set. Complete 1 set per session, 2 sessions per day.

Standing Bent Knee Calf Stretch



Stand with left foot back, both knees bent. Keeping left foot pointing straightforward, lean into wall until stretch is felt in lower calf. Hold 60 seconds.

Repeat 2 times per set. Complete 1 set per session, 2 sessions per day.

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Eccentric Heel Raises



Stand with only toes on step (heels off) and use support as needed for balance. Rise up on toes. Lifting non-injured leg, slowly lower injured heel for 3-5 seconds into stretch position (heels below toes/heels down).

Complete 15 reps per set, 3 sets per day, 7 days per week

*If you are not injured, you can still use this exercise for a good stretch. Place toes on step with heels off and hold for 15-30 seconds, 3-4 repetitions.

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