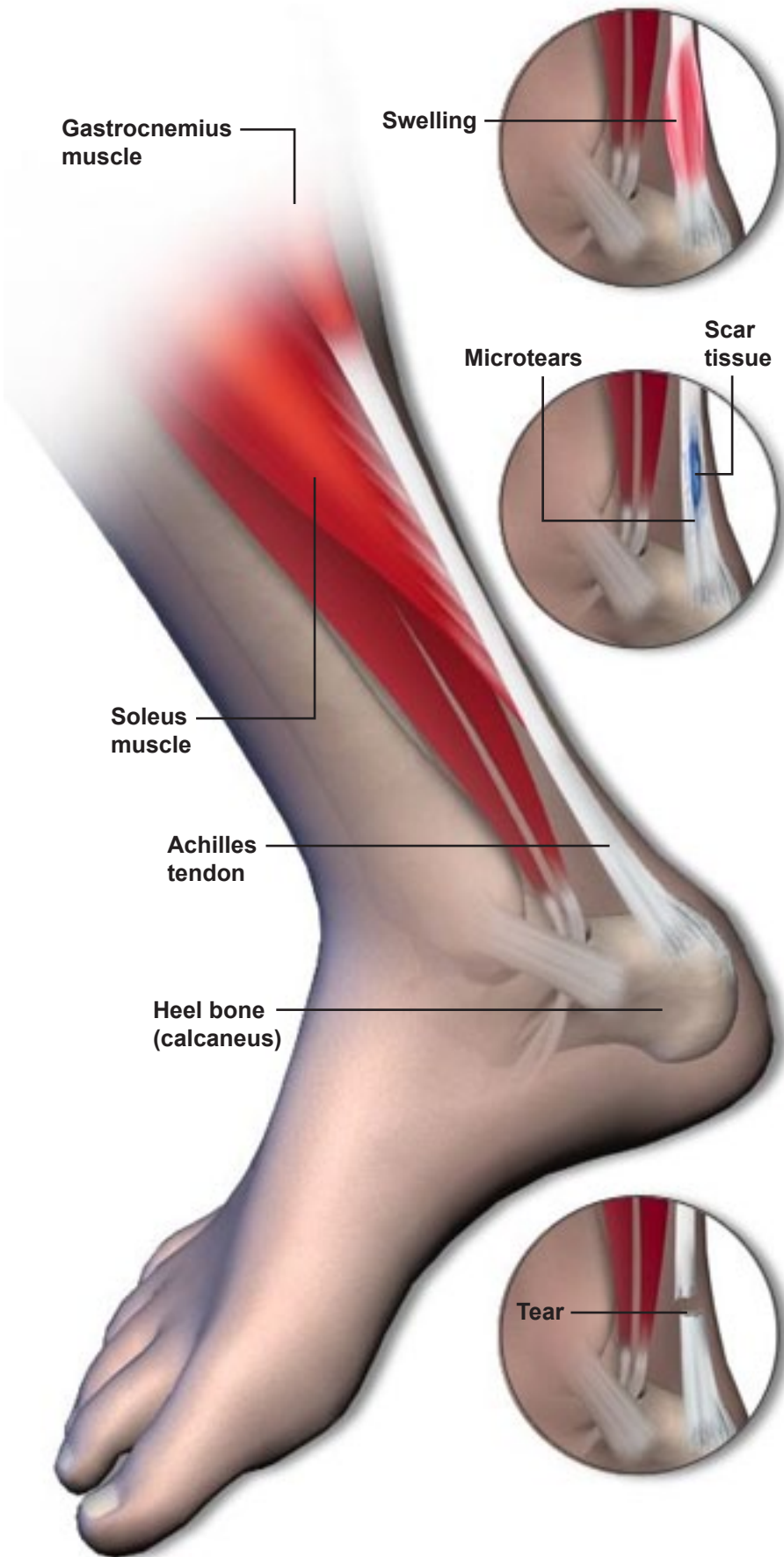


## ACHILLES TENDON INJURIES



### Overview

The Achilles tendon is the largest tendon in the body. It connects the two main calf muscles - the gastrocnemius and soleus - to the heel bone (the calcaneus). Common injuries of the Achilles tendon include tendonitis (inflammation), tendinosis (degeneration), and rupture.

### Tendinitis

Achilles tendinitis most often results from overuse during work or athletic activities. The sheath surrounding the tendon (the paratenon) may become swollen. Symptoms include a burning pain and tenderness during or after activity. The condition may become chronic without treatment and rest.

### Tendinosis

Tendinosis also comes from overuse, but unlike tendonitis, it is chronic and degenerative. Continuous stress produces microtears and a breakdown of the collagen tissue within the Achilles tendon. The condition is often painful and may reduce tendon strength and mobility.

### Rupture (tear)

An Achilles tendon may rupture because of overuse or an injury such as a direct blow to the lower leg or ankle. Most commonly, it tears when the calf is contracting while an external force is stretching it. Symptoms include severe pain and a popping sound at the time of injury, followed by swelling and the inability to stand or point the toes.

### Treatment

For tendinitis and tendinosis, treatment includes rest, ice, over-the-counter pain relievers and physical therapy. Heel lifts, which elevate the heel and diminish stress on the Achilles tendon, are often very helpful. Occasionally immobilization in a walking boot or cast is recommended. Ruptures are treated either with surgery, a cast or both.