

Kearney RS, Achten J, et al. A systematic review of early rehabilitation methods following a rupture of the Achilles tendon. Physiotherapy. 2012;98(1):24-32

Design: systematic review of clinical studies

Purpose of study: to identify and summarize the components of immediate weight bearing protocols for the treatment of acute Achilles tendon rupture

Reasons not to cite as evidence:

- Among the 8 studies retrieved for the analysis, most were case series and only 2 were randomized trials
- The findings of the randomized trials were not discussed or analyzed separately from those of the case series
- The descriptions of the findings are more narrative in nature than systematic; for example, the types of orthoses are enumerated but the outcomes associated with their use are not compared in a manner that allows for rating them in terms of effectiveness
- The review does not have enough information to give definitive recommendations for physical therapists to follow in their practice

Information of possible relevance: In the setting of Achilles tendon rupture, weight bearing in the first week is safe and appropriate. The use of and duration of orthotics requires consideration of the risks of gastroc-soleus atrophy associated with prolonged restriction of movement of the ankle versus the risks of re-rupture and tendon lengthening if the early phase of rehabilitation does not provide adequate restriction of movement, or if too much load is applied to the tendon before it is healed. The type of orthotic, the degree of plantar flexion, and the timing of removal remain uncertain and must be tailored to the individual patient.