

## Sever's Disease

### What is Sever's Disease?

Another name for Sever's Disease is *calcaneal apophysitis*. The heel bone is called the *calcaneus*. Sever's Disease is heel pain thought to be caused by inflammation around the growth plate in the calcaneus (*apophysis*). It is most likely due to repetitive overuse during sports and exercise, which causes increased strain on the heel growth plate. Sever's Disease won't cause long-term damage or arthritis. Sever's Disease is often associated with tight heel tendons. It most commonly affects physically active children who are between the ages of 8 - 14 years old, such as soccer players and gymnasts.



### Signs and symptoms of Sever's disease

- Heel pain can be in one or both heels, and it can come and go over time
- Many children walk or run with a limp; they may walk on their toes to avoid pressure on their heels
- Heel pain may increase with running or jumping; wearing stiff, hard shoes (ex. soccer cleats, flip-flops) or walking barefoot
- The pain may begin after increasing physical activity, such as trying a new sport or starting a new sports season.

### How is Sever's Disease Diagnosed?

- You may have pain when your doctor squeezes your heel bone.
- You may have pain when asked to stand or walk on your toes or on your heels.
- You may have pain in your heel when your doctor stretches your calf muscles.
- Your doctor may order x-rays of the injured foot to show an active growth plate.

### Potential Treatment Options for Sever's Disease

Most patients with Sever's Disease can be treated with a self-guided home exercise program. Your healthcare provider will discuss with you if a prescription for formal physical therapy is indicated instead of a self-directed home or school exercise program.

- Rest (protection of the heel)
- Ice (Ice 20 minutes at a time, 2-3 times a day)
- Gel heel pads / inserts
- Anti-inflammatory medication
- Well cushioned pair of shoes
- Brace (Cheetah) *\*Generally given for those who cannot wear shoes during their sport*
- Low impact aerobic training such as walking, riding a bike, elliptical or swimming
- Home exercise program focusing on increasing the flexibility of the heel cord and calf muscle

### What is the recovery time for Sever's Disease?

Recovery time will vary from patient to patient. Age, health, previous injuries, and severity of symptoms will affect recovery time. Your compliance with the stretching program and the other recommendations made by your doctor will also determine your healing time. Heel pain often completely resolves after a child's heel bone has stopped its period of growth.

### References:

Children's Hospital Colorado Sports Medicine Program for young athletes  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Medical Society of Sports Medicine