Orthopaedic Connection

Gastrocnemius Tear

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*Transforming patient information into patient understanding.*

Acute strains or ruptures of the large muscle in the lower leg usually happen on the inner side of the leg. The injury is usually where the muscle and tendon join. The injury often happens in tennis or some running or jumping activity. These injuries are most common in people older than 30 years.

**Symptoms**

In my experience the patient describes a pulling or tearing sensation in the calf. Mostly the pain is in the mid calf to the medial or inner side. Pain is instant followed soon by more diffuse swelling and tenderness. If the patient reports they heard a loud pop it was probably a rupture of the Achilles tendon and not a gastrocnemius muscle injury.

**Exam**

If symptoms are more than mild you really should have the injury evaluated Orthopaedically. Limping is always present with the foot held down at the ankle to reduce further strain on the muscle. The classic test for Achilles tendon rupture is negative.

**X-ray Tests**

Plain x-rays of the lower leg are usually done. While a fracture is unusual it can occur and to miss it is inexcusable. MRI may be considered to further define the degree of injury, but it depends on the circumstances.

**Diagnosis**

An Achilles tendon injury must at least be considered instead of the gastrocnemius muscle strain or tear. We also have to be aware of the possibility of a DVT (deep vein thrombosis) developing.

**Treatment**

Treatment is almost always non surgical. Measures include:
- Rest, ice, elevation
- A walker boot often with a ½ inch heel lift
- Compression hose
- Crutches, partial weight bearing
- Motrin, Aleve or similar

**Physical Therapy**

A physical therapist is a valuable part of the recovery process. I prefer this to start sooner than later. They will access the lower extremity and design a program for each person’s individual needs.

With proper management most of these injuries heal and patients return to their previous level of function in 6 – 8 weeks after injury.

*My patients put their trust in me and what I do improves the quality of their lives.*
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It gives access to all Website articles, Your Orthopaedic Connection and every GCH article from most recent to the first. Full text! It covers everything I do in the office and hospital.

Good Health. Good life. All the best to you.

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