

Tibialis Anterior Tendon Repair

INTRODUCTION

The tibialis anterior tendon attaches to the muscle along the front of the lower leg that pulls the ankle upwards. The tibialis anterior tendon can tear partially or rupture fully as the result of trauma or degenerative changes. Repair of the tendon aims to restore the normal walking pattern, to correct foot deformity and reduce pain.

THE SURGERY

Tibialis anterior tendon repair surgery involves a number of steps:

- General anaesthetic and IV antibiotics
- Tourniquet around the thigh
- Incision on the top of the foot
- Exposure of the tibialis anterior tendon
- Tendon or transfer using sutures and/or bone anchors
- Closure of tendon sheath
- Closure of incisions with sutures
- Local anaesthetic block
- Plaster cast or VACOPed boot in dorsiflexion

GUIDELINES FOR POST-OP RECOVERY

HOSPITAL ADMISSION

- In hospital post-op for 1 night, IV antibiotics

FIRST 2 WEEKS

- Elevate foot and rest
- Strictly **NON-WEIGHTBEARING** in cast/boot
- Mobilise with knee scooter/crutches/frame
- Cast/boot and dressings to stay dry and intact
- Strong painkillers as required
- Aspirin 100mg and Vitamin C 1g per day
- Antibiotics for 5 days
- Wiggle toes to encourage circulation

2 WEEK POST-OP APPOINTMENT

- Review by nurse & removal of cast, dressings and sutures
- Change to VACOPed surgical boot in dorsiflexion

WEEKS 3-6

- Surgical boot on at ALL times, including in bed, except for physio/exercises & showers (seated with shower chair)
- Elevate foot when resting
- Daily scar massage from 3 weeks post-op
- Continue Aspirin and Vitamin C
- Physiotherapy review (arrange first appointment for 2-5 days after the 2-week post-op check)
- **PHYSIOTHERAPY:**
 - Commence gentle active and passive ankle, midfoot and forefoot ROM exercises
 - Commence partial weightbearing, and progress up to full weightbearing at 6 weeks post-op if tolerated - in surgical boot for all weightbearing
 - General upper body, core, hip and knee exercises

6 WEEK POST-OP APPOINTMENT

- Review by Dr Zilko

WEEKS 7-16

- **PHYSIOTHERAPY:**
 - Transition out of boot into normal supportive shoes
 - Gait re-training
 - Exercise bicycle in normal shoes
 - Continue lower limb strength and conditioning

FROM 16 WEEKS

- **PHYSIOTHERAPY:**
 - Work-specific or sport-specific training
 - Safe to commence open-chain impact/running if tendon well healed

Full recovery is usually 6-12 months.

Every patient's recovery is individual and depends on the severity of the injury and complexity of the surgery.