

# Podiatry

## Children's Heel Pain (Sever's Disease)

Children's Heel Pain

### CHILDREN'S HEEL PAIN

The Redcliffe Heel Pain Clinic sees a lot of children with heel pain. The main reason for this heel pain in children is a condition called Sever's Disease. If your child has the following complaints, there is a solid reason for further investigation:

- Tenderness and tightness in the back of the heel that feels worse when the area is squeezed
- Walking or running with a limp or on tiptoes to avoid putting pressure on the heel
- We also sometimes see swelling and redness in the heel

These symptoms will generally increase following periods of higher activity. Children who participate in sports such as soccer, AFL and netball present more commonly with this condition.



### Causes

The Achilles tendon (the tendon that attaches the leg muscles to the foot) gets tight and pulls on a weak point where it attaches. The site of attachment is made of cartilage (it has not yet turned to bone) and is commonly referred to as the growth plate. The repetitive pulling of the Achilles tendon on the growth plate causes it to separate from the heel. There are many reasons why this may occur:

- During puberty the heel bone can often grow faster than the muscles and ligaments
- Pronated foot (when the foot rolls in, it puts excessive loads on the plantar fascia where it pulls against the growth plate)
- Flat or high foot arch (this affects the angle of the heel causing tightness and shortening of the achilles)
- Overweight or obesity (due to excessive weight, this increases the force going through the growth plate)

The ages this usually occurs are:

- Boys: 10-15 years old
- Girls: 8-13 years old

At the Redcliffe Heel Pain Clinic, a lot of young athletes present with Sever's who have important sporting events. We have an intensive program to accelerate healing to they are able to get back to their sport as soon as possible.

## Treatment

At the Redcliffe Heel Pain Clinic, we have a 4-step process to treat the underlying cause of Sever's:

1. Treat the pain and inflammation
2. Intensive period of focused ligament and muscle therapy to accelerate
  - ◆ This may involve: Massage, dry needling, stretching, strengthening, icing, NSAIDs
3. Biomechanical correction and footwear analysis
4. Return to sport specific training
  - ◆ An Exercise Physiologist will correct your running and landing technique to avoid reoccurrence as you return to sport, as well as provide sport specific exercises.