

PATIENT INFORMATION

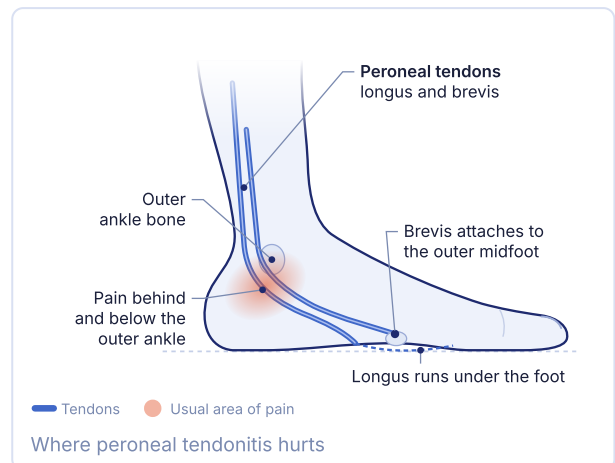
Peroneal Tendonitis & Tendinopathy

Causes, symptoms, diagnosis and treatment

Written by **William Joyce**, Consultant Podiatrist, HCPC registered · The Functional Podiatrist, Richmond & Kensington · Updated October 2026

IN SHORT

Peroneal tendonitis (or tendinopathy) is irritation of the two tendons that run behind the bony bump on the outside of the ankle. It causes pain behind or below the outer ankle, often after a rise in running or a previous ankle sprain. Early cases often improve within 6 to 12 weeks with the right management; long-standing cases can take 3 to 6 months.



What does peroneal tendonitis feel like?

Pain behind or below the outer ankle bone that builds with running, walking or long periods on your feet.

- Tenderness, and sometimes swelling, along the tendons behind the ankle
- Pain turning the foot outwards against resistance
- Stiffness first thing in the morning or after rest
- Clicking or snapping at the outer ankle, or the ankle giving way

What causes it?

Asking the tendons to absorb more load than they are ready for.

- A sudden increase in running volume or intensity
- Repeated ankle sprains and ankle instability
- A high-arched (cavus) foot, which loads the outer side of the foot
- Cambered roads, uneven trails or worn-out shoes
- Returning to sport too soon after a sprain

Is it just an ankle sprain that has not healed?

Often not. Peroneal tendinopathy is a common reason an 'old sprain' keeps hurting. Other causes of outer ankle pain include sinus tarsi syndrome, cuboid syndrome and a fracture at the base of the fifth metatarsal, so exactly where it is tender matters.

How is it diagnosed?

Through a hands-on examination of both tendons along their full length. We test the tendons against resistance, check single-leg heel raises, ankle stability and foot type, and work out whether one or both tendons are involved. Ultrasound or MRI is arranged if a tear or a slipping tendon is suspected.

Is it a tear?

Usually not. Tendinopathy means the tendon is sensitive and has lost capacity, without a discrete tear. A split tear of the peroneus brevis is a different problem that may need a scan and, occasionally, surgery. A sudden pop, bruising or new weakness should be checked.

How is it treated?

With progressive tendon loading, plus changes to whatever overloaded the tendons.

- A staged loading programme matched to your sport
- Load management rather than complete rest
- Ankle stability and balance training if the ankle gives way
- Custom orthotics, particularly for high-arched feet
- Shockwave therapy for persistent cases
- Taping or a brace, and occasionally an injection into the tendon sheath

Can I keep running?

Often yes, with the right changes. The aim is to train at a level the tendons tolerate while they are rebuilt. Running through pain that is worse the next morning tends to make it worse.

How long does it take to heal?

Early cases often improve within 6 to 12 weeks. Tendinopathy that has been present for months can take 3 to 6 months. Sticking with the rehabilitation is the biggest single factor.

WJ

FROM THE CLINIC

“Peroneal tendinopathy is one of the conditions I most often see mistaken for an ankle sprain that has not healed, and it can go undiagnosed for months. I look at foot shape, ankle stability and training load as well as the tendons themselves, because those are usually what keep the pain going.”

William Joyce, Consultant Podiatrist, The Functional Podiatrist

Three things you can do today

- 1 Swap cambered roads and rough trails for flat, even ground for now.
- 2 Replace trainers that are worn out, or very soft and unstable.
- 3 Cut back rather than stop. Complete rest rarely helps a tendon.

When to see a podiatrist

- Tendons slipping or snapping over the ankle bone
- A sudden pop with bruising or new weakness
- Pain on the bone at the base of the little-toe side of the foot after a sprain
- The ankle keeps giving way
- No improvement after 3 to 4 weeks of cutting back

Get it properly assessed

Your treatment plan depends on what is driving the problem. We assess, explain what we find and build a plan around your activity and goals.

HCPC-registered podiatrists in Richmond (Pools in the Park, TW9 2SF) and Kensington (Sprint Physiotherapy, W8 4LY). No referral needed.

More on this condition: thefunctionalpodiatrist.uk/peroneal-tendinopathy.html

Book an assessment

Call 020 3576 0630

General information only. This guide is not a diagnosis and does not replace an assessment. © The Functional Podiatrist.