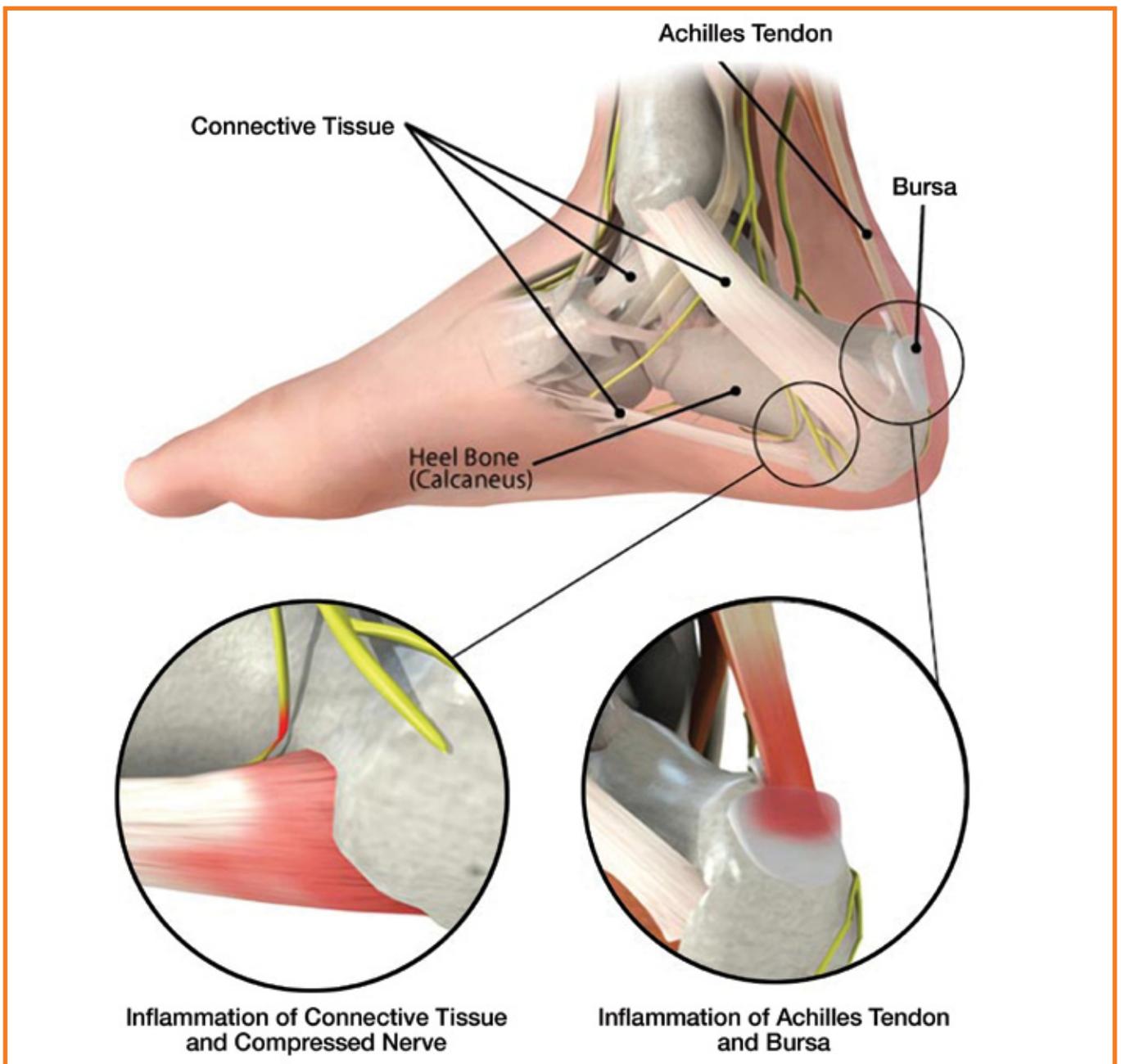


Introduction

Your heels bear tons of pressure each day when you stand and walk. It's no wonder that heel pain is a common complaint. Heel pain occurs for a variety of reasons, from wearing the wrong type of shoes to abnormal growths or tendon problems. Fortunately, most cases of heel pain can be treated without surgery. Talk to your health care provider if you have heel pain. Early diagnosis and treatment can help prevent bigger problems.

Anatomy

Your heel bone is called the calcaneus. It helps to bear and distribute your body weight across your foot when you stand or walk. Many soft tissues that help move and shape the foot are attached to the calcaneus.



Causes

Heel pain occurs for various reasons. Common causes of pain beneath the heel include bruising from stepping on something hard, displacement of the protective fat pad under the calcaneus (heel bone), inflamed connective tissue from overuse (plantar fasciitis) and irritated nerves under the heel. Rubbing from poorly fitted shoes, inflamed connective tissue (bursitis), or an inflamed tendon (Achilles tendon) most frequently cause pain behind the heel.

Symptoms

Symptoms of heel pain vary depending on the cause. It may develop gradually or occur suddenly. It may be accompanied by redness, thickened skin, or swelling.

Diagnosis

Your examiner will review your medical history and examine your heel to determine the cause of your pain. X-rays will be taken to check for bone abnormalities.

Treatment

Treatment for heel pain depends on several factors, including the cause and extent of the underlying condition. In many cases, rest, physical therapy, heel cushions or rigid heel cups, pain relievers, injections, proper shoes, and sole inserts can relieve symptoms. When such treatments fail, surgery may be recommended.

Surgery

Surgery may be used to relieve pressure from a nerve, remove an abnormal bone growth, or treat an inflamed tendon. Most surgeries for heel pain are performed as outpatient procedures. Following surgery, you will most likely participate in physical therapy to regain strength and motion.

Recovery

Recovery is an individualized process and depends on your condition and the treatment you received. Your orthopaedic surgeon may recommend that you wear customized shoe inserts or orthopedic shoes. Your examiner will let you know what to expect.

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