

Health & Wellness News

The latest health and wellness news, views and announcements

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How Diabetes Can Lead to Tendon Damage

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL DANSINGER, MD

If you have diabetes and you hurt when you move, it might be due to problems with your tendons. They're cord-like bands that connect your muscles to your bones. The high blood sugar levels that may go along with your disease play a role in stirring up your tendon trouble.

You have tendons all over your body, including in your shoulders, arms, wrists, hips, knees, and ankles. They transfer the force from your muscles to your bones so you can move.

If your diabetes isn't under control, your tendons can thicken and become more likely to tear.

How does diabetes hurt my tendons?

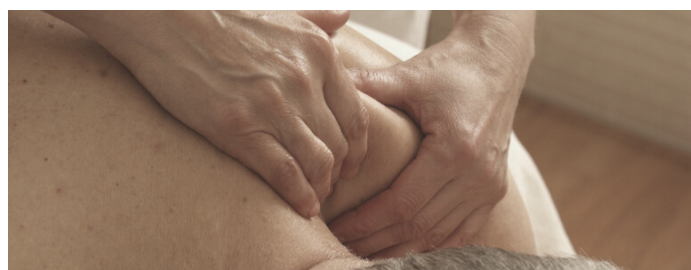
Tendon damage in type 1 and type 2 diabetes happens because of substances called advanced glycation end products (AGEs). They form when protein or fat mixes with sugar in your bloodstream.

Normally, your body makes AGEs at a slow and steady pace. But when you have diabetes, the extra sugar in your blood cranks up the speed, which affects your tendons.

Tendons are made from a protein called collagen. AGEs form a bond with it that can change the tendons' structure and affect how well they work. For instance, they could get thicker than normal and might not be able to hold as much weight as they used to. As a result, your odds of getting a tear in one of your tendons go up.

Some tendon problems you could get if you don't get your diabetes under control are:

- **Frozen shoulder:** Stiffness and pain that happens when a capsule that surrounds tendons and ligaments in your joint thickens up.
- **Rotator cuff tears:** Damage to the tendons and muscles that surround your shoulder joint, including the supraspinatus muscle.
- **Trigger finger:** Your finger becomes stuck in a bent position and straightens with a snap, like the sound of a trigger being pulled.



- **Carpal tunnel syndrome:** You get numbness, tingling, and weakness in your wrist because of pressure on the nerve that runs through it.
- **Dupuytren's contracture:** Thickening of the tissue under the skin of your hand that causes your fingers to bend in toward your palm.

Tendon damage is painful and can hinder how much you can move your joint. Even if you have surgery to fix the damage, the tendon can tear again. Studies show that more than a third of people with diabetes who have surgery to fix a torn rotator cuff will get the problem again.

How can tendon damage affect my diabetes? Exercise is important to help keep your diabetes under control, but you may find it harder to work out when your tendons are painful and stiff.

Damage to the Achilles tendon in the back of your heel can put a cap on how much you can move your ankle. This limited motion forces you to put extra pressure on the middle of your foot with each step, which increases your risk for foot sores.

Talk to your doctor about ways to make sure your blood sugar levels stay down while you recover from tendon problems.

How can I prevent and treat tendon damage?

The best way to avoid tendon problems is to get your diabetes under control. Lower your blood sugar with the help of diet, exercise, and medicine. And if you're overweight, try to shed some pounds. It will improve your health and take pressure off your tendons at the same time.

If you already have tendon damage, ask your doctor about treatments like these:

- Pain relievers such as aspirin or ibuprofen
- Muscle relaxants
- Physical therapy and exercise
- Heat or ice
- A splint to keep your joint steady while your tendons heal

Your doctor may also suggest a steroid shot into your joint to relieve tendon problems. Keep in mind that steroids can cause a short-term spike in your blood sugar levels. Ask your doctor whether the benefits of this treatment outweigh the risks.

Alternative Treatments for Chronic Pain

REVIEWED BY CAROL DERSARKISSIAN, MD

In the past decade, there has been a growing acceptance of the benefits of mind-body therapies, acupuncture, and some nutritional supplements for treating pain. Other alternative treatments such as massage, chiropractic therapies, therapeutic touch, certain herbal therapies, and dietary approaches have the potential to alleviate chronic pain in some people. However, the evidence supporting these therapies is less concrete.

Mind-Body Therapies for Chronic Pain

Mind-body therapies are treatments that are meant to help the mind's ability to affect the functions and physical symptoms of the body. Mind-body therapies use various approaches, including relaxation techniques, meditation, guided imagery, biofeedback, and hypnosis. Relaxation techniques can help alleviate discomfort related to chronic pain.

Acupuncture and Chronic Pain

Acupuncture is thought to decrease chronic pain by increasing the release of endorphins, chemicals that block pain. Many acu-points are near nerves. When stimulated, these nerves cause a dull ache or feeling of fullness in the muscle. The stimulated muscle sends a message to the central nervous system (the brain and spinal cord), causing the release of endorphins that block the message of pain from being delivered to the brain.

Chiropractic Treatment and Massage

Chiropractic treatment is the most common nonsurgical treatment for back pain. Improvements of people undergoing chiropractic manipulations were noted in some trials. However, the treatment's effectiveness in treating chronic back and neck pain has not been supported by compelling evidence from the majority of clinical trials. Further studies are currently assessing the effectiveness of chiropractic care for pain management.

Massage is being increasingly used by people suffering from pain, mostly to manage chronic back and neck problems. Massage can reduce stress and relieve tension by enhancing blood flow. This treatment also can reduce the presence of substances that may generate and sustain pain. Available data suggest that massage therapy holds considerable promise for managing back pain.





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Chiropractic Care

counterbalances the everyday wear and tear



Neurological Relief

releases tension that builds up at the base of the skull

Dietary Supplements for Chronic Pain

There is solid evidence indicating that chondroitin sulfate may help relieve pain due to knee osteoarthritis. This compound has been found to decrease pain and increase mobility of the knee and is generally well tolerated and safe.

Other dietary supplements, such as fish oils, also show some evidence of benefit, although more research is needed.

Herbal Remedies and Chronic Pain

It has been difficult to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of some herbal remedies. Others, such as white willow bark, devil's claw, ginger, and turmeric have some evidence to support their use to treat pain. If you decide to use herbs to better manage your pain, it is of critical importance to share this information with your doctor. Some herbs may interact with drugs you are receiving for pain or other conditions and may harm your health.

Tips to Stay Smart, Sharp, and Focused

REVIEWED BY BRUNILDA NAZARIO, MD

Use Your Brain

It's true: Use it or lose it. Stretching your brain keeps your mind sharp. People who are more active in mentally challenging activities are more likely to stay sharp. Try these:

- Read a book.
- Go to a lecture.
- Listen to the radio.
- Play a game.
- Visit a museum.
- Learn a second language.

Mix Things Up

Remember trying to talk backwards as a child? Researchers at Duke University created exercises they call "neurobics," which challenge your brain to think in new ways. Since your five senses are key to learning, use them to exercise your mind. If you're right-handed, try using your left hand. Drive to work by another route. Close your eyes and see if you can recognize food by taste.



<https://www.webmd.com/healthy-aging/ss/slideshow-fit-brains>

A Healthy Diet Builds Brainpower

Do your brain a favor and choose foods that are good for your heart and waistline. Being obese in middle age makes you twice as likely to have dementia later on. High cholesterol and high blood pressure raise your chances, too. Try these easy tips:

- Bake or grill foods instead of frying.
- Cook with "good" fats like oils from nuts, seeds, and olives instead of cream, butter, and fats from meat.
- Eat colorful fruits and veggies.
- Eat fish.

Watch What You Drink

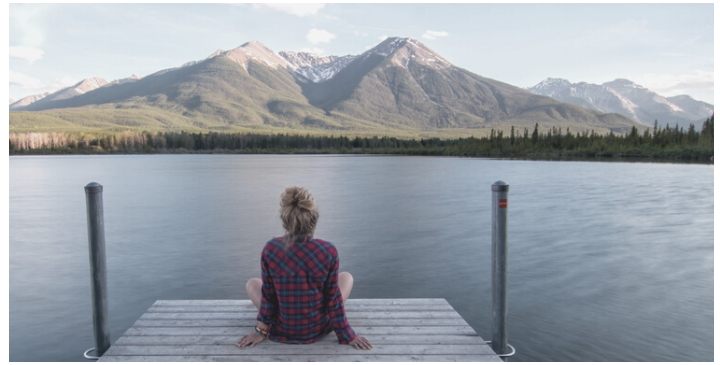
You know that too many drinks can affect your judgment, speech, movement, and memory. But did you know alcohol can have long-term effects? Too much drinking over a long period of time can shrink the frontal lobes of your brain. And that damage can last forever, even if you quit drinking. A healthy amount is considered one drink a day for women and two for men.

Music Helps Your Brain

Thank your mom for making you practice the piano. Playing an instrument early in life pays off in clearer thinking when you're older. Musical experience boosts mental functions that have nothing to do with music, such as memory and ability to plan. It also helps with greater hand coordination. Plus, it's fun -- and it's never too late to start.

Make Friends for Your Mind

Be a people person! Talking with others actually sharpens your brain, whether at work, at home, or out in your community. Studies show social activities improve your mind. So volunteer, sign up for a class, or call a friend!



Stay Calm

Too much stress can hurt your gray matter, which contains cells that store and process information. Here are some ways to chill:

- Take deep breaths.
- Find something that makes you laugh.
- Listen to music.
- Try yoga or meditation.
- Find someone to talk to.

Sleep and the Brain

Get enough sleep before and after you learn something new. You need sleep on both ends. When you start out tired, it's hard to focus on things. And when you sleep afterward, your brain files away the new info so you can recall it later. A long night's rest is best for memory and your mood. Adults need 7-8 hours of sleep every night, during which the glymphatic system cleans out waste, or "junk," particles.

Memory Helpers

Everybody spaces out now and then. As you get older, you may not remember things as easily as you used to. That's a normal part of aging. Some helpful hints:

- Write things down.
- Use the calendar and reminder functions in your phone, even for simple things
- Focus on one task at a time.
- Learn new things one step at a time.

Healthy Bones

BUILD BONE STRENGTH WITH A PLANT-BASED DIET

By eating a varied plant-based diet, you'll get all the calcium you need to build strong bones without the added health risks of milk and other dairy products.

Leafy green vegetables, like broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kale, and collards, are loaded with calcium. Beans, fortified juices, and plant milks are also great sources of calcium. And calcium absorption of leafy green vegetables is actually higher than cow's milk.

Vitamin C from citrus fruits, tomatoes, peppers, and other fruits and vegetables is essential for making collagen, the connective tissue that minerals cling to when bone is formed.

Vitamin K is thought to stimulate bone formation. It is found most abundantly in dark leafy greens like kale and spinach, but is also readily available in beans, soy products, and some fruits and vegetables.

Potassium decreases the loss of calcium from the body and increases the rate of bone building. Oranges, bananas, potatoes, and many other fruits, vegetables, and beans are all rich sources of potassium.

Magnesium, like calcium, is an important bone mineral. Studies have shown higher magnesium intakes to be associated with stronger bones. "Beans and greens"—legumes and green leafy vegetables—are excellent sources of magnesium.



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Vitamin D is another important component for strong bones. The natural source of vitamin D is sunlight: Our skin makes vitamin D when exposed to sun. Five to 15 minutes of midday sun exposure can be enough to meet many people's vitamin D needs. However, having darker skin, living in the north, and even the winter season can all make it hard to get enough vitamin D from the sun alone. Therefore, fortified cereals, grains, bread, orange juice, and soy or rice milk exist as options for providing vitamin D through the diet. Supplements are also available. Milk does not naturally contain vitamin D.

Exercise is one of the most effective ways to increase bone density and decrease the risk of osteoporosis. Its benefits have been observed in studies of both children and adults.


Research shows that dairy products have little or no benefit for bones. A 2005 review published in Pediatrics showed that drinking milk does not improve bone strength in children. In a more recent study, researchers tracked the diets, exercise, and stress fracture rates of adolescent girls and concluded that dairy products and calcium do not prevent stress fractures.

<https://www.pcrm.org/health-topics/healthy-bones>

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