

Minimally invasive Achilles tendon surgery reduces complications

10 February 2015, by Jim Ritter

Brian Frias was rounding second base and heading to third when he heard a sharp snap in his Achilles tendon.

"I went down like a sack of potatoes," he said.

Orthopaedic surgeon Adam Schiff, MD, of Loyola University Medical Center, used a new [minimally invasive technique](#) to [repair](#) the ruptured Achilles tendon on Mr. Frias' left leg. The technique requires a smaller incision, minimizes wound healing complications and leaves less scar tissue.

"I would totally recommend the surgery," Mr. Frias said.

Conventional surgical repair of a ruptured Achilles tendon requires a vertical incision five or six inches long. The minimally invasive technique requires a 1 to 1.5 inch horizontal incision that is perpendicular to the Achilles tendon. The surgeon uses a device that allows for most of the repair work to be done outside the body, resulting in a less-invasive approach.

"It's the new trend in foot and ankle surgery," Dr. Schiff said. "For those who qualify, the minimally invasive approach has been very successful."

Achilles tendon rupture is a common injury that typically occurs while running or jumping. Most injuries are sports related, although ruptures also can be caused by workplace injuries or trauma. The typical patient is a middle-age male weekend warrior.

If treated within 48 hours, a ruptured Achilles tendon can be treated non-operatively by wearing a cast for six to eight weeks and then undergoing functional rehabilitation.

Surgical repair reduces the risk of re-rupturing the Achilles, and enables patients to return to work or sports earlier.

The minimally invasive surgical technique is not appropriate for all patients, and it must be done within a week or two of the injury. As in non-surgical repairs, the patient spends four to six weeks in a cast and then undergoes functional rehabilitation.

After completing rehab, Mr. Frias returned to work as a hotel chef, where he is on his feet and does a lot of walking and climbing stairs. He said his repaired Achilles is as good as new. "I'm 500 percent satisfied."

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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