Sever's Disease

Sever's disease, or calcaneal apophysitis, is the most common cause of heel pain in the growing athlete and is due to overuse and repetitive microtrauma of the growth plate of the calcaneus, or heel bone. It occurs in children ages 7 to 15, with the majority of patients presenting between 10 and 12 years.

Symptoms:
- Complaints of pain or tenderness in the heel (or both heels)
- Discomfort upon awakening, or when heel is squeezed
- Limping
- More severe pain after walking or exercising and increased difficulty walking
- Pain during running or playing sports

Cause:
Sever's disease is directly related to overuse of the heel bone (calcaneus) and Achilles tendon of the heel. This can come from playing sports or anything that involves a lot of heel movements. It can be associated with starting a new sport, or the start of a new season. Too much weight bearing down of the heel can also cause Sever's disease, as can excessive traction since the bones and tendons are still developing. It occurs more commonly in children who pronate (roll inward), and involves both heels in more than half of patients.

Treatment:
- Achilles tendon stretching
- Using R.I.C.E. (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation)
- Casting
- Foot orthotics (rarely)
- Anti-inflammatory medication

Recovery:
Sever's disease is self-recovering, meaning that it will go away on its own when it is used less or when the bone is finished growing. This condition is not expected to creast any long-term disability and is expected to subside in 6-8 weeks. However, while the disease does subside quickly, it can recur, for example, at the start of a new sports season if stretching exercises are not continued. It is more common in boys aged 10-14 and usually subsides by the age of 17 if chronic symptoms appear.

Prevention:
- Maintain good flexibility through stretching exercises
- Avoid excessive running on hard surfaces
- Use quality, well fitting shoes with firm support and a shock-absorbent sole