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Calf Lengthening Surgery

There are different operations to correct calf tightness. These include:

1. Medial head of gastrocnemius release (one part of the gastrocnemius muscle)
2. Gastrocnemius and/or soleus muscle aponeurosis release.
3. Achilles tendon (heel cord) lengthening.

Why would they be done?

Sometimes calf tightness does not respond to stretches/physiotherapy. If the calf tightness is causing problems, then your surgeon may recommend that you consider an operation to lengthen one or more of the muscles/tendons in the calf.

It may foot problems can be related to tightness of the calf muscles or Achilles tendon and often a calf lengthening operation is included as part of more extensive surgery. The choice of surgery depends on the type and severity of the problem.

- A **medial head of gastrocnemius release** (MHGR) is often performed for heel pain that is not responding to other treatments (Achilles tendinopathy or plantar fasciitis).
- A **gastrocnemius/soleus lengthening** is often used when hind-foot deformities are associated with calf tightness.
- An **Achilles tendon lengthening** is usually used when there is severe deformity.

What does each operation involve?

1. Medial head of gastrocnemius release

A medial head of gastrocnemius release is done under general anesthetic. A small cut is made behind the knee. The thick connective tissue cover of the muscle is



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divided and allowed to stretch. Most patients can walk straight after surgery and do not need a plaster.

2. Gastrocnemius/Soleus aponeurotic lengthening (Strayer's, Baker's or Vulpius release)

The procedure is under general anesthesia. A cut is made on the back of the calf and part of the muscle/connective tissue is cut and allowed to lengthen. There are many variations to this operation. It allows for more stretch than 'MHGR' above. Most patients are kept in plaster for up to 6 weeks after surgery.

3. Achilles tendon lengthening

This can be part of a larger operation and may be done in children as part of the treatment of club foot.

For more information on what to expect after surgery, please speak to your surgeon for more detailed information.