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When it comes to **achilles resilience training**, you've likely encountered advice ranging from "just do calf raises" to more specific instructions like "bend or straighten your knee." As a former newspaper health reporter turned Suncoast fitness writer who's heard countless injury stories from orthopaedists, PTs, and often my fellow morning pickleball players, I've learned that the devil truly lies in the details. Today, we'll break down the differences between bent knee and straight knee calf raises, explain which one better supports your Achilles tendon, and address why tendon health is about more than just a single exercise.

*Photo credit: Brendan Sapp / Unsplash*

## Understanding Achilles Injuries: The Slow Build, Not the Sudden Snap

One thing I always ask athletes is, " **What changed in the last two weeks?**" More than 80% of Achilles tendon pain isn't from a dramatic event but from overuse—subtle overloads repeated every day. Aging tendons adapt more slowly and tolerate sudden loads less well, so what used to feel fine can amp up discomfort when volume or intensity jumps without your body having time to adjust.

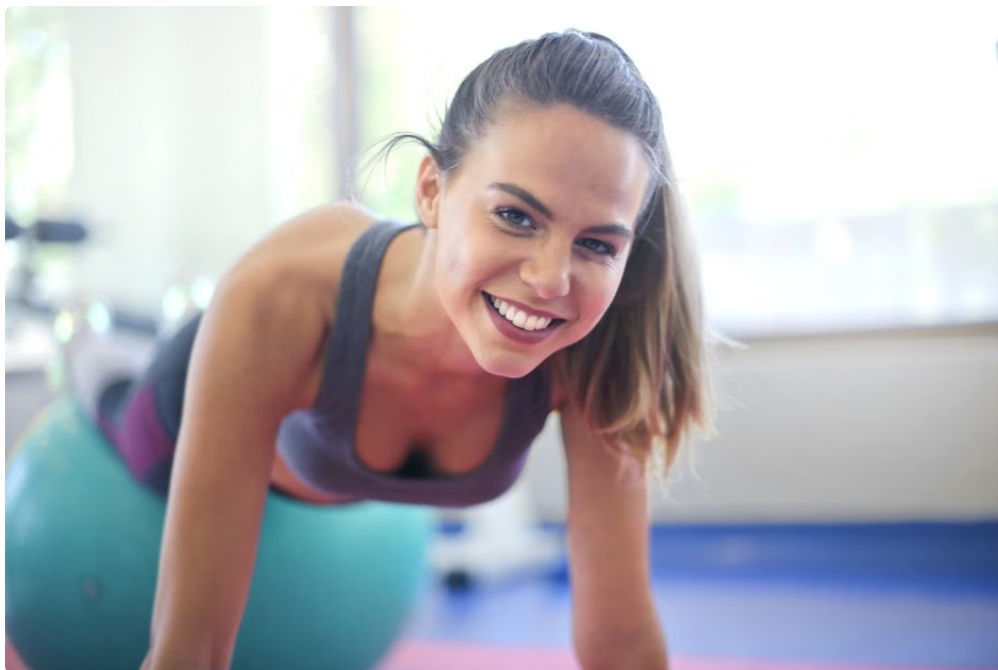
Just like the rotator cuff irritation I've heard about during bench-side chats—which often shows up as night pain or limits reaching behind the back—your Achilles tendon sends warning signals well before a tear. Understanding these signs and responding with proper training methods can save you from long-term setbacks.

## Calf Anatomy Quick Dive: Soleus vs. Gastrocnemius

The calf complex actually consists of two major muscles:

- **Gastrocnemius:** Originates above the knee, crosses the knee joint, and contributes to powerful, explosive movements like jumping and sprinting.
- **Soleus:** Lies underneath the gastrocnemius, originates below the knee, and is crucial for endurance and postural control, especially during walking and standing.

Why mention this? Because your choice between bent knee and straight knee calf raises targets these muscles differently—and this affects your Achilles since both muscles insert into the tendon.



## Bent Knee vs. Straight Knee Calf Raises: What's the Difference?

| Calf Raise Type          | Muscle Emphasis        | Achilles Load Characteristics                                                            | Ideal For                                                       |
|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Straight Knee Calf Raise | Gastrocnemius dominant | Higher tensile load on Achilles, especially during explosive contractions                | Explosive power training, advanced Achilles resilience training |
| Bent Knee Calf Raise     | Soleus dominant        | Lower tensile load but longer time under tension with more slow, controlled contractions | Endurance, rehab, and foundational Achilles strengthening       |

### Which One Helps Achilles Tendon More?

The answer isn't "either-or," but rather "when and how." The bent knee calf raise engages the soleus, which places a significant but gentler load on your Achilles tendon, ideal for those rebuilding tendon resilience or managing mild irritation. The soleus' deeper position and the bent knee position take strain off the gastrocnemius, promoting strength-building with lower risk.

Straight knee calf raises, by contrast, target the gastrocnemius more heavily—adding greater load and tensile stress onto the Achilles. This is excellent for advanced conditioning, but if you're facing early Achilles issues or are older, jumping prematurely into these can cause setbacks.

## The Magic of the Slow Lowering Phase

No matter which variant you choose, the **slow lowering phase** (eccentric contraction) is crucial for tendon health. Many injury stories I've overheard at pickleball are about players neglecting this phase—skipping the controlled descent—then wondering why their tendons flare up.

- **Why slow eccentric matters:** It promotes collagen alignment within the tendon, progressively increases tensile strength, and stimulates tendon adaptation.
- **How to do it:** Raise up on your toes, hold briefly, then slowly lower down over 3–5 seconds until your heels are nearly touching the floor.

Counting these slow seconds aloud during your warm-up (yes, I'm guilty of this!) helps maintain focus and avoids the "eight minutes skipped" syndrome followed by injury surprise.

# Holistic Approach: Don't Blame the Paddle or Sneakers

Listening to players at the [sarasotamagazine.com](https://sarasotamagazine.com) benches, I can't count how many times I've heard the classic "my Achilles hurts because of my paddle." Let me cut through the noise:

- *Paddle or footwear are rarely sole culprits.*
- *Overuse, inadequate warm-up, and poor mechanics lead the way.*
- *Situations like tight grips or arm-dominant mechanics cause elbow pain—similar principles of load and frequency apply to Achilles.*

Invest in proper warm-up drills, strength building, and consider recovery aids like Joy Organics organic CBD gummies for supplemental relief from occasional discomfort. Many athletes I know swear by natural options combined with solid training routines.



## Sample Achilles Resilience Training Routine

1. **Warm-up:** 8 minutes of dynamic ankle mobility and light marching, counting seconds out loud.
2. **Bent Knee Calf Raises:** 3 sets of 15 repetitions with slow lowering phase (4 seconds down), resting 30 seconds between sets.
3. **Straight Knee Calf Raises:** 2 sets of 12 repetitions with slow lowering phase, adding a pause at the top for maximal engagement.
4. **Balance Drills:** Single-leg stands for 30 seconds each side, progressing to eyes closed.
5. **Stretch and Recovery:** Gentle calf stretches followed by optional use of Joy Organics organic CBD gummies to ease any mild tendon discomfort.

Remember, consistency and frequency are key drivers of injury risk—not jumping into extremes or skipping your foundational work.

## Final Thoughts

Both bent knee and straight knee calf raises play distinct roles in **achilles resilience training**. You want to start with bent knee raises to build a solid soleus and tendon endurance base, then gently integrate straight knee raises

as your tendon tolerance improves. Emphasize the slow lowering phase to stimulate quality tendon remodeling, and never underestimate the power of volume and frequency over flashy single-move breakthroughs.

And if you're feeling extra beat-up after a tough round, don't hesitate to explore natural recovery methods. Personally, having Joy Organics organic CBD gummies in my paddle bag has been a game changer after long pickleball mornings.

So next time you're deciding on calf raises, ask yourself: " *What has changed in the last two weeks—am I progressing smartly or overloading suddenly?*" With that mindfulness and a solid training approach, your Achilles will thank you with resilience and fewer aches.

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