

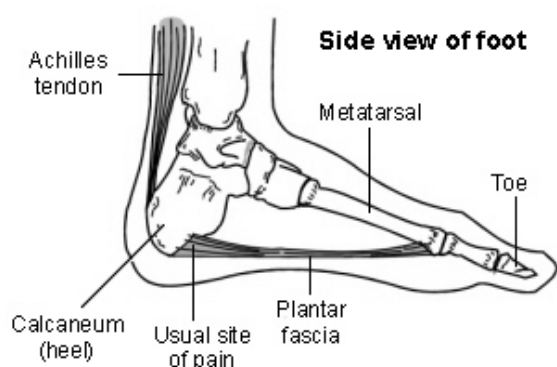
Plantar fasciitis

Plantar fasciitis causes pain under the heel. It usually goes in time. Treatment speeds up recovery and includes rest, good footwear, heel pads, painkillers, and exercises.

What is Plantar Fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis means inflammation of the plantar fascia. The plantar fascia is a strong band of tissue (similar to a ligament) that stretches from the heel to the middle bones of the foot. It supports the arch of the foot. Small injuries to the plantar fascia can cause inflammation and symptoms. The injury is usually near to where it attaches to the heel bone.

What are the Symptoms of Plantar Fasciitis?



Pain is the main symptom. This can be anywhere on the underside of the heel. Commonly one spot is found as the main source of pain. This is often about 4 cms forward from the heel, and may be tender to touch. The pain usually eases on resting the foot, but is often worst when first used in the morning. Gentle exercise may then ease things a little as the day goes by, but a long walk often makes the pain worse. Sudden stretching of the sole of the foot may make the pain worse, for example, walking up stairs or on tip-toes.

Who gets Plantar Fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis is quite common. It mainly affects people over 40 and is more common in women. It is also common in athletes. Situations where it is more likely include the following:

- If you do lots of walking, running, standing, etc, when you are not used to it.
- Wearing shoes with poor cushioning and without good support
- Being overweight or sudden gains in weight will put extra strain on the heel.
- Overuse or sudden stretching of the sole. For example: athletes who increase their running intensity or distance; poor technique starting 'off the blocks'; etc.
- Tightness of the Achilles tendon (at the bottom of the calf muscles above the heel).

It could also be a biomechanical problem such as over pronation (in rolling feet). This can cause the plantar fascia to be excessively stretched and inflamed as it tries to prevent abnormal pronation.

- Some types of arthritis can also trigger plantar fasciitis.
- High arches – shortening of the plantar fascia, lack of shock absorption.
- Flat feet – increased pronation, fascia excessively stretched as it tries to prevent abnormal pronation.

Often there is no apparent cause, particularly in older people. A common wrong belief is that the pain is due to a bony growth or 'spur' coming from the heel bone (calcaneum). Many people have a bony spur of the heel bone but this is not usually the cause of the pain.

Treatment for Plantar Fasciitis

Usually the inflammation and pain will ease in time. Fascia tissue, like ligament tissue, heals quite slowly. It may take several months or more to go. However, the following may speed recovery. With these measures, recovery is likely to be within weeks rather than months.

Rest the foot as much as possible. Avoid running, excess walking or standing.. Gentle walking and exercises described below are fine.

Footwear. Do not walk barefoot on hard surfaces i.e. wooden or laminate flooring. Choose shoes with cushioned heels and a good arch support. A laced sports shoe rather than open sandals is best. Avoid old or worn shoes that may not give a good cushion to the heel. You may find that wearing a shoe with a slight heel raise reduces your symptoms.

Insoles are a good way of treating this type of condition as they gently give complete support allowing it to settle into a more natural position. Arch support prevents the foot from rolling in and restores a natural arch.

Arch supports can help to strengthen the arch by supporting the foot in a more neutral position. They should be flexible but provide a stable base for the foot.

Heel pads. An adhesive heel pad may help to absorb shock to the heel by raising the heel, which will redistribute pressure and cushion for the plantar fascia. To be used on a temporary basis and worn in the shoe of the painful heel. You can buy various pads and shoe inserts to cushion the heel. These work best if you put them in your shoes at all times. Use soft materials. If the heel is very tender, cut a small hole in the heel pad at the site of the most tender spot. The tender part of the heel will not then touch anything inside the shoe at all.

Reusable Hot and Cold Gel Packs – Proven therapy for plantar fasciitis is alternating the application of heat and cold coupled with massage work well to relieve pain, reduce swelling and promote healing. Use ice pack in morning and heat pack in the evening.

Ice massage to the painful area, either apply ice pack to affected area for twenty minutes followed by gentle massage three times a day or massage the affected area with a small cube of ice in circular movements for a few minutes, ensuring the ice does not burn the skin.

Painkillers such as paracetamol will often ease the pain. Sometimes anti-inflammatory medicines such as ibuprofen are useful. These are painkillers but also reduce inflammation and may work better than ordinary painkillers. Some people find that rubbing a cream or gel onto the heel that contains an anti-inflammatory medicine is helpful.

Exercises. Regular gentle stretching of the Achilles tendon and the plantar fascia will help ease the symptoms. This is because most people with plantar fasciitis have a slight tightness of the Achilles tendon. This tends to pull at the back of the heel and have a knock-on effect of keeping the plantar fascia tight. Also, when you are asleep overnight, the plantar fascia tends to tighten up (which is why it is usually most painful first thing in the morning). The exercises on the sheet attached are a guide. Choose three of the exercises and carry out the ice treatment as advised.

The aim of the exercises is to gently loosen up the tendons and fascia above and below the heel. If any of the exercises effect other joint problems, discontinue that exercise.

It is important to treat plantar fasciitis as it may stop you keeping up your normal level of activity and alter your walking pattern which could cause you to develop other joint problems.

Suggested Products and Where to Buy Them

Cosyfeet have a range of arch supports and heel cushions: www.cosyfeet.com Tel: 01458 447275



Orthaheel Heel Pain
Reliever



Gel Heel Edge



Orthaheel Regular

Mobolis- www.mobolishealthcare.com Tel: 01616780233



Formthotic ¾ Length
Dual Density



Cambion 4 Degree Heel
Pad

HomeCraft: www.homecraft-rolyan.com Tel:08702423305



Gel Heel Cups

Physio Med www.physio-med.com Tel: 01457860444



Blue 100 ¾ length Insoles