

Plantar Fasciitis

Information for patients



What is Plantar Fasciitis?

Plantar Fasciitis is a traction injury causing inflammation of the heel and underside of the foot.

The pain tends to be worse when you get out of bed, or with the first few steps you take after resting. The most common symptoms are tightness, burning, sharp stabbing pain, dull ache, and the feeling of standing on stone or of a band ripping.

What can aggravate it?

- Flat feet or high arched feet
- An increase in activity levels
- Poor footwear – shoes with no support, cushioning or fastening
- Being overweight
- Having a job that involves lots of walking or standing on hard surfaces
- Having tight calf muscles

How is it treated?

There are a number of different treatments for Plantar Fasciitis. The condition is best treated when combining all of these treatment options:

- **Stretching**

It is very important to stretch your calf muscles at least twice a day as this will speed the healing process and reduce the pain more quickly. Tight calf muscles restrict your ankle movement and puts extra strain on the plantar fascia (see exercises given below).

- **Footwear**

Wearing a shoe that supports your foot and fastens securely is an important part of your treatment plan. A trainer style shoe is ideal. Look for a shoe with a wide weight bearing sole and a low broad heel rather than 'flats'. It is essential that you minimise the time spent walking around barefoot.

- **Ice/Massage**

Ice will help to reduce local inflammation and massage will help to stretch the plantar fascia (see dynamic stretch below).

Orthotics/ insoles

Wearing a cushioned insole can help. If you have a foot type that rolls inwards when you stand or walk, try an 'anti-pronatory' insole. Insoles are used to support the foot and reduce strain on the plantar fascia. Insoles should be transferred between (i.e. worn in) all your shoes, even your slippers.

Will the symptoms go completely?

The plantar fascia tissue heals quite slowly and may take up to 18 months to resolve completely. Pain levels can be reduced greatly, or may even disappear within a matter of weeks or months.

It is important to continue with the treatments, even after the symptoms have subsided, to avoid reoccurrence of symptoms.

Stretches for Plantar Fasciitis

1. Achilles tendon and plantar fascia stretch

First thing in the morning, loop a towel or a belt around the ball of your foot and, keeping your knee straight, pull your toes towards your nose, holding for 30 seconds. Repeat 3 times for each foot.



2. Dynamic stretches for plantar fascia

This involves filling a plastic bottle three quarters full with water and freezing it. Roll your foot over it from your toes to your heel and from side to side for a few minutes twice a day.



3. Wall stretches for Achilles tendon

These exercises need to be performed first with the knee **straight** and then with the knee **bent** in order to stretch both parts of your Achilles tendon. Twice a day do the following wall stretches:

(a) Face the wall and put both forearms on the wall at shoulder height. Keep your feet parallel with toes slightly turned in and weight on outside of feet. Your feet should be approximately 30 cm (12 inches) from the wall. With knees straight, lean towards the wall until a tightening is felt in the calf at the back leg. Gently hold for 20 seconds



(b) Now repeat this exercise but with one leg in front of the other and with both knees bent. Repeat the stretches 3 times.

4. Stair stretches for Achilles tendon and plantar fascia

Holding the stair-rail for support, with legs slightly apart, position the feet so that both heels are off the edge of the step. Lower the heels, keeping the knees straight, until a tightening is felt in the calf. Hold this position for 20–60 seconds and then raise the heels back to neutral. Repeat 6 times, at least twice a day.



5. Heel Raises and Toe Raises

Stand with your feet flat on the floor. Rise up on to your toes and hold for 30 seconds. Relax back down.

Stand with your feet flat on the floor. Rise up on to your heels (toes off the floor) and hold for 30 seconds. Relax back down.

Walk about on tip toe and on your heels. These exercises will help to strengthen the foot and lower leg.

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