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University Health Board

Plantar Fasciitis

Advice

Plantar fasciitis is the inflammation of the strong band of tissue (like a ligament) that stretches from your heel to your toes. It supports the arch of your foot and also acts as a shock-absorber in your foot. It causes pain under your heel, but it usually goes in time. Treatment including rest, good footwear, insoles (orthoses), and painkillers and stretching exercises may speed up recovery.



What causes plantar fasciitis?

Repeated small injuries to the fascia (with or without inflammation) are thought to be the cause and the injury is usually near to where the plantar fascia attaches to your heel bone. You are more likely to injure your plantar fascia in certain situations.

For example:

- If you are on your feet for a lot of the time e.g. walking, standing, running.
- If you have recently started exercising on a different surface
- If you have been wearing shoes with poor cushioning
- If you are overweight – this will put extra strain on your heel
- If there is an overuse or stretching of your sole e.g. athletes who increase running intensity or distances
- If you have a tight Achilles tendon. This can affect your ability to flex your ankle.

How common is plantar fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis is very common. Around 1 in 10 people will get plantar fasciitis at some time in their life. It may take several months and a combination of different treatments.

What are the symptoms of plantar fasciitis?

Pain is the main symptom. This can be anywhere on the underside of the heel. However commonly, one spot is found as the main source of pain and this is often about 4 cm forward from your heel, and may be tender to touch.

The pain is often worse when you take your first steps on getting up in the morning, or after long periods of rest where no weight is placed on your foot. You might find the pain feels better during exercise, but returns after resting and that it is difficult to raise your toes off the floor.

The following advice should help you to recover.

Things you should do	Things you should not do
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rest and raise your foot on a stool when you can• Put an ice pack (or bag of frozen peas) in a towel on the painful area for up to 20 minutes every 2 to 3 hours• Wear wide comfortable shoes with a low heel and soft sole• Use soft insoles or heel pads in your shoes• Use shoes with cushioned heels and good arch support• Do regular gentle stretching exercises• Do exercises that do not put pressure on your feet, such as swimming• Take pain relief regularly• Try not to walk barefoot on hard surfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use ice packs over areas of skin that are in poor condition• If you have poor sensation to cold• If you know you have poor circulation.• Place ice packs directly onto your skin as they can burn.• Do not leave ice on while asleep• Walk or stand still for long periods• Wear high heels or tight pointy shoes,• Wear flip-flops or backless slippers

What should I take for Pain?

Painkillers, such as **Paracetamol**, are useful to ease pain, but it is best to take them regularly for a few days or so rather than every now and then. They can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local shops. Make sure you do not take any other product containing Paracetamol. **With all medication it is essential that you follow the instructions on the packet or bottle carefully.**

Anti-inflammatory painkillers can also be used. These relieve pain and may also limit inflammation and swelling, however if you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant you should not use them. Side effects sometimes occur with anti-inflammatory painkillers - stomach pain and bleeding from the stomach, are the most serious. Some people with asthma, high blood pressure, kidney failure or heart failure may not be able to take them either. You can buy Ibuprofen at pharmacies both in tablet and gel form. There is less risk of side-effects with the gel, however, the amount of the drug that gets into the bloodstream is much less than with tablets and it is important that you use enough gel.

You can ask a pharmacist about:



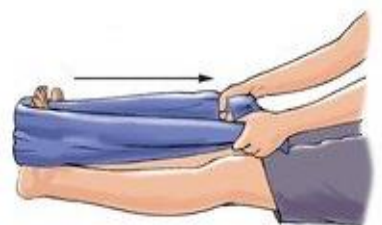
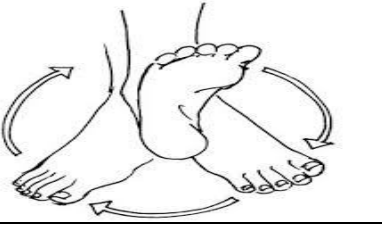
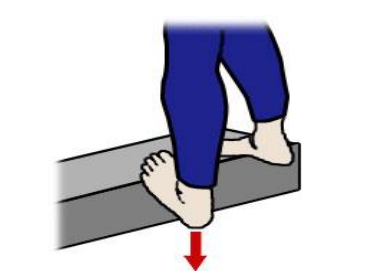
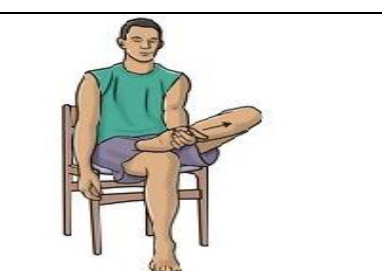
- the best painkiller to take
- insoles and pads for your shoes
- if you need to see a GP

See your GP if:

- the pain is severe (e.g. stops you doing normal activities despite pain relief) or is getting worse
- the pain has not improved after treating it yourself for 2 weeks
- You start to have tingling or loss of feeling in your foot
- You have diabetes – foot problems can be more serious if you have diabetes

What Exercises can I do?

Complete rest is not advisable but it is important that you prevent putting the plantar fascia under strain in the early stages of healing. Before you get out of bed in the morning, and then periodically throughout the day, do the following exercises to increase flexibility and ease pain.

	<p>Bend and flex</p> <p>Whilst sitting, lift your foot a few centimeters off the floor and slowly pull your toes and ankle up towards you to stretch the tissue on the bottom of your sore foot.</p> <p>Hold the stretch for 10 secs and then point your toes away. Repeat 5 times.</p> <p>If both feet are affected then repeat on other foot</p>
	<p>Dynamic stretch</p> <p>Sit on the edge of your bed or a chair and roll your foot forwards and backwards over round drinks bottle/can that has been chilled in the freezer for 5 mins.</p> <p>You could also use a tennis ball or a rolled up towel.</p>
	<p>Plantar fascia stretch</p> <p>Fold a towel lengthwise to make an exercise strap. Sit down, and place the folded towel under the arches of both feet.</p> <p>Grab the ends of the towel with both hands, and gently pull the tops of your feet toward you. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat 5 times.</p>
	<p>Ankle rolling</p> <p>Do gentle ankle rolls moving your foot in a circle to keep the tissues around the ankle and on the back of the heel flexible.</p> <p>Repeat 10 times.</p>
	<p>Heel lowers</p> <p>Stand on the edge of a stair tread facing upstairs using the stair-rail for support.</p> <p>Your feet should be positioned so that both heels are off the end of the step, with the legs slightly apart.</p> <p>Lower your heels, keeping your knee straight and feel the stretch in your calves.</p> <p>Hold this position for 30 seconds</p> <p>Repeat 3 times</p>
	<p>Big toe stretch</p> <p>Sit on a chair or bed.</p> <p>Cross one leg over the other for the big toe stretch. Grab your big toe, pull it gently toward you, and hold for 15 to 30 seconds.</p> <p>Repeat 3 times, then do the same with the other foot.</p>

How many and how often?

Start by doing 5 repetitions of each exercise, 3 times a day. Add an extra 1 or 2 repetitions every few days as long as you feel comfortable. If these exercises make your symptoms worse, or cause new pain, try to make the movement smaller - if this does not help then stop.

Can I do anything else?

A GP might refer you to a physiotherapist for exercises or to see a foot specialist (podiatrist), who can recommend things like insoles and the right shoes to wear.

Physiotherapy and podiatry may not be available for free on the NHS everywhere and waiting times can be long. You can also pay to see a podiatrist or physiotherapist privately.

Remember

If you are concerned about your progress, or if you have not improved within 10 days, we advise you to contact your GP or return to the Emergency Department/MIU department where you were seen

References:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/plantar-fasciitis/>

<https://www.healthline.com/health/fitness-exercise/plantar-fasciitis-stretches#other-tips>

<https://cks.nice.org.uk/plantar-fasciitis#!scenario>

If you are at all concerned about your injury please contact the relevant Emergency Department/Minor Injury Unit (MIU):

Royal Gwent Hospital: 01633 234056

Nevill Hall Hospital: 01873 732073

Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr (YYF) MIU 01443 802353 or 802349

Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan (YAB) MIU: 01495 363318

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg".**