

PLANTAR FASCIITIS – some simple self-care measures

Plantar fasciitis usually causes pain under your heel. It does go in time but this process can be speeded up and your pain reduced more quickly if some simple self-care measures are adopted on a daily basis.

Avoid re-injuring the plantar fascia:

- Avoid being on your feet for a long time if you are not used to it. People with a sedentary lifestyle are more prone to this condition, often triggering it by suddenly increasing their activity. Build up activity/exercise gradually
- If the heel pain is worse in certain shoes, avoid wearing these shoes
- Avoid shoes with poor cushioning or poor arch support
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Avoid lots of walking on hard ground (wear cushioned trainers if this can't be avoided)
- Avoid going barefoot – some patients report finding Crocs helpful as an indoor shoe and alternative to slippers, and these do provide some arch support

Things you can do to help your heel pain:

- Rest your foot – avoid running, excess walking or standing, but gentle walking and exercise is fine
- Stretch your calf muscle - Your podiatrist may well have asked you to stretch out your calf muscle. A tight calf muscle commonly accompanies plantar fasciitis and it is important you comply with the stretching advice. Face a wall with your feet pointed straight ahead, heels on the ground. Keeping the “stretching leg” straight, bend the knee of the other leg and move the foot towards the wall. Lean into the wall, using your hands on the wall to maintain balance. Hold for 30 – 40 seconds, then switch legs. Aim to do this morning (after you've been up and about for a bit and are “warmed up”), and repeat midday and in the evening.

Patients often complain their pain is worse on getting up in the mornings or after resting for a while

- Avoid this pain by stretching the plantar fascia before rising, by using a theraband (an old tie will work just as well) to loop over the front of the foot.

Use both hands to pull the front of the foot towards you while you hold the leg straight

- Another way to stretch the plantar fascia, is to roll your foot over a plastic bottle filled with warm water – this will give your foot a warm massage
- You can also stretch the plantar fascia by pulling the toes towards the shin while the knee is bent.
- At the end of the day, you might find rolling your foot over a plastic bottle filled with cold water or even ice helpful. If using ice, restrict it's application to only 10 minutes and leave an hour between applications. Put a tea towel between your foot and the ice to avoid “ice-burn injury”

Footwear:

- Wear supportive cushioned shoes – trainers are ideal
- Try wearing a heel cushion/heel cup to reduce the pressure on your heel when walking (available from chemists or mail order supplier such as www.footcaresupplies.com)

Your podiatrist may well have prescribed some insoles for you to wear. However, there are a number of good insoles available from chemists, mail order sites (see above) such as Orthaheel, Talarmade and many others you may find useful to have as spares.

- There are other devices available to buy to help heel pain e.g. the Aircast plantar fasciitis Airheel, which is designed for use when walking and may be a good alternative to applying taping to the foot, which can be an effective way of relieving plantar fascia strain
- Night splint devices may also help e.g the Strassburg sock – these works by helping to stretch the plantar fascia overnight. These devices may help some patients - if you are interested in purchasing these, visit a website such as www.physioroom.com