

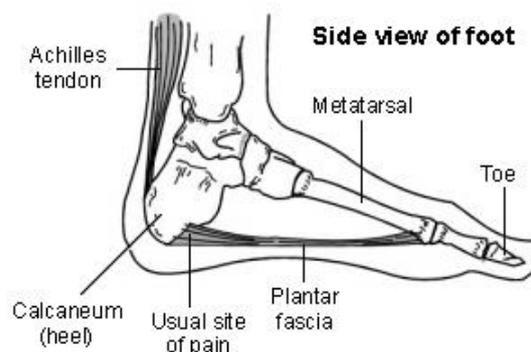
## Plantar Fasciitis Patient Information

### **What is plantar fasciitis?**

Plantar Fasciitis, means inflammation of your plantar fascia. Your plantar fascia is a strong band of tissue (like a ligament) that stretches from your heel to your middle foot bones.

### **What causes plantar fasciitis?**

Repeated small injuries to the fascia (with or without inflammation) are thought to be the cause of plantar fasciitis. 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:



- Both if you are on your feet a lot of the time, and if you live a very sedentary lifestyle are more prone to Plantar Fasciitis.
- Sometimes the mechanics of the foot means the fascia tissue can become overworked or stretched abnormally, resulting in tears and inflammation.
- If you have recently started exercising on a different surface. (Eg: running on road instead of a track)
- If you have been wearing shoes with poor cushioning or poor arch support.
- **If you are overweight, this will put extra strain on your heel.**
- If you have a tight Achilles tendon (the big tendon at the bottom of your calf muscles above your heel). This can affect your ability to flex your ankle and make you more likely to damage your plantar fascia.
- Often there is no apparent cause for plantar fasciitis, particularly in older people.

### **How common is Plantar Fasciitis?**

Plantar fasciitis is common. Around 1 in 10 people will get plantar fasciitis at some time in their life. It is most common in people between the ages of 40 to 60 years. However, it can occur at any age. It is twice as common in women as men. It is also common in athletes.

### **What are the symptoms of plantar fasciitis?**

Pain is the main symptom. This can be anywhere on the underside of your heel. The pain is often worst 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. Gentle exercise may ease things a little as the day goes by, but a long walk or being on your feet for a long time often makes the pain worse. Resting your foot usually eases the pain.

### **What is the initial treatment for plantar fasciitis?**

Usually the pain will ease in time with no intervention. 'Fascia' tissue, like 'ligament' tissue, heals quite slowly. It may take several months or more to go. However, the following treatments may help to speed recovery.

- **Reduce excessive strain on foot-** Rest the foot as much as possible. Avoid running, excess walking or standing. **If overweight, weight loss will reduce strain on heel.**
- **Stretching -** *gentle stretching of your Achilles tendon and plantar fascia will help to ease your symptoms and are the most important aspect of treatment for Plantar Fasciitis.* This is because most people with plantar fasciitis often have a slight tightness of their Achilles tendon. The aim of these exercises is to loosen up the tendons and fascia gently above and below your heel. Your Podiatrist will talk you through these stretches.

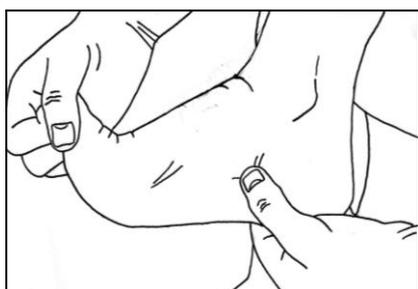
- **Orthoses-** If there is a mechanical cause for Plantar Fasciitis (eg: excessive pronation) orthoses/ insoles may be prescribed to correct mechanical cause and reduce tension on the fascia.
- **Footwear-** Do not walk barefoot on hard surfaces. Choose shoes with cushioned heels and a good arch support. Avoid old or worn shoes that may not give a good cushion to your heel.
- **Pain relief-** Painkillers such as paracetamol will often ease the pain. Sometimes anti inflammatory medicines such as ibuprofen are useful. Daily icing of the area will help reduce inflammation.

### **Are there any other treatments?**

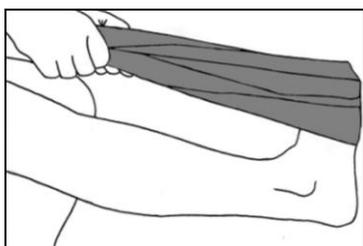
A steroid (cortisone) injection is sometimes tried if your pain is not improving despite 'conservative' measures. It may relieve the pain in some people for several weeks or months but does not always cure the problem.

### **Can Plantar Fasciitis be prevented?**

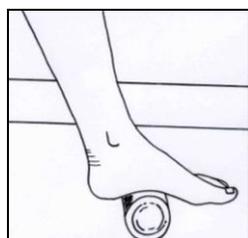
- Regularly changing trainers used for running or walking.
- Wearing shoes with good cushioning in the heels and good arch support.
- **Losing weight if you are overweight.**
- Regularly stretching the plantar fascia and Achilles tendon, especially before exercise.
- Avoiding exercising on hard surfaces.



Sit on a chair with foot on opposite knee  
Grasp the toes and ball of the foot  
Using the other hand as support, pull toes, foot and ankle towards the knee until stretch is felt on the ball of the foot  
Deep massage area for 30 seconds and repeat 10 times, 2-3 times a day



Sit with leg straight in front and use a towel to loop it over the foot, including the toes.  
Pull the towel until you feel the pull in your calf and the ball of your foot.  
Hold for 10 seconds and repeat 10 times, 2-3 times a day



Massaging and stretching the plantar fascia using a can or bottle. For safety carry out this exercise while seated.

20 minutes, 3 times a day

#### **Useful Information for patients**

[www.nhsinform.co.uk](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk)

[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

[www.paintoolkit.org](http://www.paintoolkit.org)

nhs24 MSK Help App

#### **Application of ice pack**

Ice should not be applied directly to the skin. Always wrap ice pack in towel or cloth to avoid the danger of ice burns. Apply for 20 minutes, 2-3 times a day.