

PLANTAR FASCIITIS

INFLAMMATION AND PAIN AT THE HEEL OF THE FOOT

RESPONSE
PHYSIO FCP SERVICES

What is Plantar Fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis is one of the most common conditions causing heel pain. It involves inflammation of the plantar fascia — a tough, fibrous band of tissue that runs along the sole of the foot. The plantar fascia attaches to the heel bone (calcaneus) and to the base of the toes. It helps support the arch of the foot and plays an important role in normal foot mechanics during walking. The plantar fascia is designed to absorb the high stresses and strains we place on our feet when walking, running, and engaging in other activities like sports. However, sometimes, too much pressure can damage or tear the tissues, leading to inflammation and heel pain.

What are the Symptoms of Plantar Fasciitis?

- Plantar fasciitis typically manifests as a stabbing or burning pain in and around the heel. Sometimes the pain can be sudden, occurring after missing a step or jumping.
- Pain with the first few steps after getting out of bed in the morning, or after a long period of rest, such as after a long car ride. The pain usually subsides after a few minutes of walking but might worsen with prolonged walking.

What are Risk Factors of Plantar Fasciitis?

- Being overweight and obese.
- Having high arches in your feet or being flat-footed.
- Regular high-impact activities such as running, jumping or dancing. Approximately one in 10 people who run regularly develop plantar fasciitis.
- Running or standing on hard ground increases your risk.
- Spending a lot of time on your feet - for instance, a job where you're standing or walking around all day.
- Wearing worn-out trainers that no longer absorb shock very well.

How is Plantar Fasciitis Diagnosed?

Plantar fasciitis is diagnosed based on your medical history and physical exam. During the exam, your First Contact Physiotherapist will check for areas of tenderness in your foot. The location of your pain can help determine its cause.

Advice/Treatment

- **Physical Therapy:** Stretching is one of the best exercises for plantar fasciitis. This targets the plantar fascia and Achilles tendon and to strengthen lower leg muscles. A therapist might also teach you to apply athletic taping to support the bottom of your foot.
- **Orthotics:** Your healthcare professional might prescribe off-the-shelf or custom-fitted arch supports or soft silicone heel pads (orthotics) to distribute the pressure on your feet more evenly.
- **Ice:** Rolling your foot over a cold water bottle or ice for 20 minutes is effective. This can be done 3 to 4 times a day.
- **Shock wave therapy:** This therapy involves delivering low-energy or high-energy shock waves to a specific area. The shock waves create microscopic trauma, which triggers a healing response from the body. This process is thought to help promote healing in the plantar fascia.



Exercises which your First Contact Practitioner (Physiotherapist) may recommend:



Place an ice pack or pack of frozen peas under your heel while sitting to reduce inflammation and pain. Ensure you wrap the ice in a thin towel to prevent excessive cold exposure.



While sitting on a chair, place a towel underneath the ball of your foot. Gently pull your toes towards you, with the towel. Hold this position, you should feel a stretch at the back of your leg, in your calf.



Stand with your toes on the edge of a step or a box. Hold onto something stable for support if required. Drop your heels downwards. You should feel a stretch just below the back of your knee, in the calf (this part of the calf is known as the gastrocnemius).



An example of a soft silicone heel pad

If you need further advice or assistance with your condition, please contact your local surgery to book an appointment with your first contact practitioner (physiotherapist).