



Orthopaedic Surgery & Sports Medicine

Plantar fasciitis

Description

Plantar fasciitis is a condition where a person will experience severe pain in the heel. This is caused by inflammation (swelling) of the plantar fascia – the tissue that runs along the bottom of the foot from the heel bone to the toes. Plantar fasciitis causes stabbing or burning pain that is usually worse when you step out of bed in the morning. This is due to the fascia tightening up overnight. Once the foot is stretched, the pain will decrease, but it may return after prolonged periods of standing or standing up from a seated position.

Common signs and symptoms

- Sharp pain in the inside portion of the bottom of the foot (arch area)
- Heel pain that tends to worsen with the first few steps in the morning, stairs, or standing on your tiptoe
- Mild swelling in the heel
- Heel pain after standing for a long period of time
- Heel pain after exercise

Causes

- Prolonged running, walking, or stair climbing
- Arthritis
- Diabetes
- Poor foot mechanics such as high arches, flat feet, and/or abnormal walking pattern
- Improper footwear such as high heels or shoes that lack an arch support

Risk increases with:

- Sports or activities that include running, dancing, or aerobics.
- Flat feet or high arches.
- Pregnancy.
- Being overweight.
- Occupation that require prolonged standing or walking on hard surfaces.
- Wearing shoes with poor arch support or stiff soles.

Initial treatment:

Initial treatment consists of medications and ice to relieve pain; stretching and strengthening exercises of the foot, ankle, and leg; rest; and modification of the activity that initially caused the problem. These can all be carried out at home for acute cases, although referral to a physical therapist or athletic trainer for further evaluation and treatment may be recommended. Arch

supports (orthotics) for those with flat feet may also be indicated. Gradual return to activity is allowed after symptoms are resolved. Rarely, surgery is attempted to remove the chronically inflamed tissue.

Medication

Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications such as aspirin and ibuprofen (do not take within 7 days before surgery), or other minor pain relievers such as acetaminophen, are often recommended. Take these as directed by your physician. Contact your physician immediately if any bleeding, stomach upset, or signs of an allergic reaction occur. Topical ointments may be of benefit. Pain relievers may be prescribed as necessary by your physician. Use only as directed and only as much as you need.

Heat and cold

- Cold is used to relieve pain and reduce inflammation for acute and chronic cases. Cold should be applied for 10 to 15 minutes every 2 to 3 hours for inflammation and pain and immediately after any activity that aggravates your symptoms. Use ice packs or an ice massage. Cold should be applied for the first 72 hours after initial injury.
- Heat may be used before performing stretching and strengthening activities prescribed by your physician, physical therapist, or athletic trainer. Use a heat pack or a warm soak. Do not use heat if inflammation (swelling) is present.