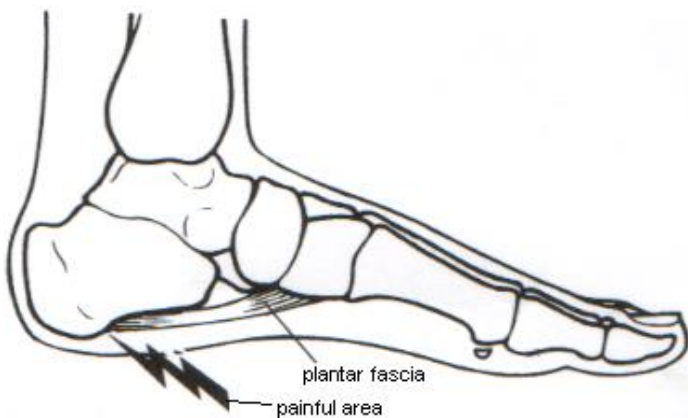


Plantar Fasciitis & Heel Spurs

⦿ What is it?

Plantar fasciitis is one of the most common causes of heel pain. The location of the pain is usually the origin of the *plantar fascia*, a tough, fibrous expanse of tissue on the sole of the foot, about 5cm from the back of the heel.



The most common site of plantar fasciitis

⦿ What causes it?

When standing, the plantar fascia is placed under tension, causing it to pull at the point where it attaches to the heel bone. This repetitious action during walking and running can result in inflammation of this area. Often a sharp splinter of bone can develop with constant pulling of the plantar fascia on the bone. This is called a *heel spur*. Other causes include:

- Excessive rolling in of the ankles (pronation) and flat feet.
- Weight gain/pregnancy
- Increased activity level
- Calf muscle/Achilles tendon tightness
- Inappropriate footwear
- Wear and tear associated with age

⦿ Who gets it?

Typically, people 35 years and over, especially if they start running. Those working in jobs requiring long periods of standing such as teachers and nurses are also more likely to suffer from this condition. It may also be seen in young sportspeople.

⦿ What are the symptoms?

Those afflicted with plantar fasciitis often report a sharp tearing/burning sensation, worst when getting out of bed or standing after long periods of sitting. Much of the pain subsides soon after, but can return toward the end of the day. Resting eases pain until you get up and walk. The painful area is tender to touch, and x-rays may show a small spur on the heel.

⦿ How is it treated?

Treatment varies based on cause and nature of pain, whether other treatments have been tried, and how long you have been suffering from pain. Treatment usually involves:

- *Rest/Icing* – reduces inflammation
- *Heel pads* – provide cushioning for the painful heels
- *Orthotics* – cushion and offload the heel, correct structural abnormalities, and reduce plantar fascia tension
- *Stretches* – of the calf and plantar fascia
- *Anti-inflammatories* - gels (Voltaren) or cortisone injections
- *Surgery* – plantar fascia release, a last resort!

⦿ Icing Program

Lay a frozen water bottle on its side on the floor and using gentle pressure, push down on the bottle and roll it back and forth through your arch. This provides icing to reduce inflammation, but over time also stretches the plantar fascia to a more functional length.

HOW OFTEN? – 2 x 10 minute sessions per day, morning & night

⦿ Stretching Program

❶ With the front knee bent and back knee straight, lean forward against a wall, both heels touching the ground. You should feel a stretch in your calf as you do this. Hold the stretch for **30 seconds** before switching to the other side.



❷ Repeat the above stretch, but this time with the back knee bent as well. You should now feel the stretch lower down, just above the heel. Hold the stretch for **30 seconds** before switching the other side.

*HOW OFTEN? – 30 seconds each side, at least 4 times a day!
You should also stretch before and after any exercise.*