



Plantar Fasciitis

Plantar fasciitis is one of the most common causes of heel pain. It involves inflammation of a thick band of tissue (plantar fascia) that runs across the bottom of your foot and connects your heel bone to your toes. The condition is more common in runners. In addition, people who are overweight and those who wear shoes with inadequate support have an increased risk of developing plantar fasciitis.

Symptoms: Plantar fasciitis typically causes a stabbing pain in the bottom of your foot near the heel. The pain is usually the worst with the first few steps in the morning after waking. As you get up and move more, the pain normally decreases, but it might also be triggered by long periods of standing or rising from sitting. The pain is usually worse after exercise, not during it.

Causes: Under normal circumstances, your plantar fascia acts like a shock-absorbing bowstring, supporting the arch in your foot. If tension and stress on that bowstring become too great, small tears can arise in the fascia. Repetitive stretching and tearing can cause the fascia to become irritated or inflamed, though in many cases of plantar fasciitis, the cause isn't clear.

Risk Factors: Though plantar fasciitis can arise without an obvious cause, factors that can increase your risk of developing it include:

- **Age** – Plantar fasciitis is most common between the ages of 40 and 60.
- **Certain Types of Exercise** – Activities that place a lot of stress on your heel and attached tissue – such as long-distance running, ballistic jumping activities, ballet dancing, and aerobic dance – can contribute to an earlier onset of plantar fasciitis.
- **Foot Mechanics** – Being flat-footed, having a high arch, or even having an abnormal pattern of walking can affect the way weight is distributed when you're standing and put added stress on the fascia.
- **Obesity** – Excess pounds put extra stress on your plantar fascia.
- **Occupations that keep you on your feet** – Factory workers, teachers, and others who spend most of their work hours walking or standing on hard surfaces can damage their plantar fascia.

Complications: Ignoring plantar fasciitis may result in chronic heel pain that hinders your regular activities. Changing the way you walk to minimize plantar fasciitis pain might lead to foot, knee, hip, or back problems.

Treatment: Most people who have plantar fasciitis recover with conservative treatments, including resting, icing the painful area, and stretching, in several months.

Medications: Pain relievers such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB, others) and naproxen sodium (Aleve) can ease the pain and inflammation associated with plantar fasciitis.

Therapies: Stretching and strengthening exercises or use of specialized devices may provide symptom relief. These include:

- **Physical therapy** – A physical therapist can instruct you in a series of exercises to stretch the plantar fascia and Achilles tendon and to strengthen lower leg muscles, which stabilize your

ankle and heel. A therapist might also teach you to apply athletic taping to support the bottom of your foot.

- **Night splints** – Your physical therapist or doctor might recommend that you wear a splint that stretches your calf and the arch of your foot while you sleep. This holds the plantar fascia and Achilles tendon in a lengthened position overnight and facilitates stretching.
- **Orthotics** – Your doctor might prescribe off-the-shelf or custom-fitted arch supports (orthotics) to help distribute pressure to your feet more evenly.

Lifestyle and Home Remedies: To reduce the pain of plantar fasciitis, try these self-care tips:

- **Maintain a healthy weight** - Lose weight if you're overweight or obese to minimize stress on your feet.
- **Choose supportive shoes** - Avoid high heels. Buy shoes with a low to moderate heel, good arch support, and shock absorbency. Don't go barefoot, especially on hard surfaces.
- **Don't wear worn-out athletic shoes** - Replace your old athletic shoes before they stop supporting and cushioning your feet. If you're a runner, buy new shoes after about 400-500 miles of use.
- **Change your sport** - Try a low-impact sport, such as swimming or bicycling, instead of walking or jogging.
- **Apply ice** - Held a cloth-covered ice pack over the area of pain for 15-20 minutes, 3 or 4 times a day, or after activity. Or try ice massage: Freeze a water-filled paper cup and roll it over the site of discomfort for about 5-7 minutes. Regular ice massage can help reduce pain and inflammation.
- **Stretch your arches** - Simple home exercises can stretch your plantar fascia, Achilles tendon, and calf muscles.

Source: Mayo Clinic

www.commonhealth.virginia.gov

The contents of the CommonHealth weekly emails may be reprinted from an outside resource in the area of health, safety, and wellness and is intended to provide one or more views on a topic. These views do not necessarily represent the views of the Commonwealth of Virginia, CommonHealth, or any particular agency and are offered for educational purposes. If you have questions or concerns about this article, please email us at wellness@dhrm.virginia.gov