

HEEL PAIN - PLANTAR FASCIITIS

Heel pain is most often caused by plantar fasciitis. Plantar fasciitis is an inflammation of the band of tissue (the plantar fascia) that extends from the heel to the toes. In this condition, the fascia first becomes irritated and then inflamed, resulting in heel pain.

Causes

The most common cause of plantar fasciitis relates to faulty structure of the foot. For example, people who have problems with their arches, either overly flat feet or high-arched feet, are more prone to developing plantar fasciitis. Wearing nonsupportive footwear on hard, flat surfaces puts abnormal strain on the plantar fascia and can also lead to plantar fasciitis. This is particularly evident when one's job requires long hours on the feet. Obesity and overuse may also contribute to plantar fasciitis.

Symptoms

The symptoms of plantar fasciitis are:

- Pain on the bottom of the heel
- Pain in the arch of the foot
- Pain that is usually worse upon arising
- Pain that increases over a period of months
- Swelling on the bottom of the heel

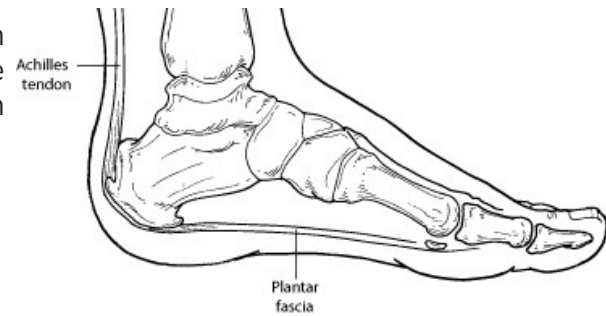
Diagnosis

To arrive at a diagnosis, the foot and ankle surgeon will obtain your medical history and examine your foot. Diagnostic imaging studies, such as x-rays or other imaging modalities, may be used to distinguish the different types of heel pain.

Nonsurgical Treatment

Treatment of plantar fasciitis begins with first-line strategies, which you can begin at home:

- Stretching exercises. Exercises that stretch out the calf muscles help ease pain and assist with recovery.
- Avoid going barefoot. When you walk without shoes, you put undue strain and stress on your plantar fascia.
- Ice. Putting an ice pack on your heel for 20 minutes several times a day helps reduce inflammation.
- Limit activities. Cut down on extended physical activities.
- Shoe modifications. Wear supportive shoes with good arch support and a slightly raised heel.



- Medications. Oral nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, may be recommended to reduce pain and inflammation.

If you still have pain after several weeks, see your foot and ankle surgeon, who may add one or more of these treatment approaches:

- Orthotics. Custom orthotic devices fit into your shoe and help correct the underlying structural abnormalities
- Removable walking cast. A removable walking cast may be used to keep your foot immobile for a few weeks to allow it to rest and heal.
- Night splint. Wearing a night splint allows you to maintain an extended stretch of the plantar fascia while sleeping.
- Physical therapy. Exercises and other physical therapy measures may be used to help provide relief.

When Is Surgery Needed?

Although most patients with plantar fasciitis respond to nonsurgical treatment, a small percentage of patients may require surgery. If, after several months of nonsurgical treatment, you continue to have heel pain, surgery will be considered. Your foot and ankle surgeon will discuss the surgical options with you and determine which approach would be most beneficial.

Long-Term Care

No matter what kind of treatment you undergo for plantar fasciitis, the underlying causes that led to this condition may remain. Therefore, you will need to continue with preventive measures. Wearing supportive shoes, stretching and using custom orthotic devices are the mainstay of long-term treatment for plantar fasciitis.

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