

PLANTAR FASCIITIS

The Plantar Fascia is a thick band of tissue that runs across the bottom of the foot and connects the heel bone to the ball of the foot. It supports the arch of the foot and absorbs shock while walking and running. Plantar fasciitis is a common foot pain that is usually seen with a sharp pain on the bottom of the foot close to the heel. The pain typically is the worst after waking up, although pain tends to decrease after getting up and moving, however it can return after long periods of standing or after sitting for a long time. If it is left untreated, not only could symptoms at the feet worsen; but it could lead to pain in the knees, hips, and low back.

RISK FACTORS

- **Age:** Most common in people between the ages of 40 and 60.
- **Certain types of exercise:** Activities require you to push off the ball of your foot. Typically seen in long distance running, ballet/dance, sports that have a lot of change in direction and speed (basketball, soccer, rugby, etc.)
- **High arches, flat feet, or excessive pronation** can affect the way weight is distributed across the foot when standing and/or walking.
- **Obesity:** Excess weight can put extra strain on the plantar fascia.
- Occupations that keep you on your feet: People who spend most of their work days walking or standing on hard surfaces can be at increased risk for plantar fasciitis. Factory workers, construction workers, restaurant/kitchen workers, and/or retail workers.

POTENTIAL THERAPIES

- **Medications:** Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs like ibuprofen and naproxen can help ease pain and reduce inflammation.
- **Physical therapy:** A physical therapist can show you exercises to stretch/strengthen the lower leg.



- **Massage:** A physical therapist or massage therapist can release not only the plantar fascia but also the muscles of the back of the legs, such as the calf, hamstring, and gluteal muscles.
- **Orthotics:** your health care provider might suggest store bought shoe inserts or prescribe custom made orthotics to provide arch support and help distribute the pressure on the feet more evenly.
- **Night splints:** A physical therapist or health care provider might recommend a nightly splint that holds the plantar fascia and Achilles tendon in a lengthened position overnight.
- **Walking boots, canes or crutches:** These could be used for a brief period either to immobilize the joint and/or to help not putting your full weight on the foot.

DAILY CHECK IN:

- When do you feel discomfort in your feet?
- In a typical day, how much time are you walking?
- Do you spend a lot of time barefoot?
- Where do you feel fatigue sets in the most in your body and why?
- What kind of footwear do you have when your foot is at its worst? Best?

PROACTIVE STEPS

- **Maintain a healthy weight:** Extra weight can put added stress on the plantar fascia
- **Replace worn-out shoes:** If the shoe is losing its cushioning and support; the tread on the bottom of the shoe is worn down; and/or the toe box of the shoe has become very flimsy, it might be time to replace your shoes.
- **Choose supportive shoes:** Finding a shoe that has more arch support and cushioning can help redistribute your weight away from the inflamed areas.
- **Change your sport.** Try a low impact activity like swimming or cycling instead of weight-bearing activity like walking or jogging.
- **Self massage:** consider using a tennis ball, foam roller, or golf ball to gently massage the bottom of your feet and/or calves.
- **Apply ice:** Cold therapy can reduce inflammation. Cover an ice pack with a cloth and apply to the painful area for 15 minutes three to four times. Use a frozen bottle of water to roll on the bottom of your foot for an ice massage.
- **Stretch:** Simple stretches that address tight areas, like the bottom of your foot, calf muscles, and hamstrings, can relieve symptoms.



TENNIS BALL MASSAGE

The plan behind using a tennis ball (or any type of self massage tool) is to apply specific pressure to a stiff or aching spot on a tense muscle to apply a massage. For tired and sore feet, simply put the tennis ball on the floor and apply gentle pressure by placing the bottom of your barefoot or socked foot on the ball. Try these 3 techniques to kneed out those sticky knots:

- Put a tennis ball on the ground and start with placing the heel on the ball and rolling your foot over the arch of the foot, towards the toes. Go back and forth along each metatarsal of the foot. Do about 3 passes for each toe on your foot.
- Find a particularly tight area to stop and apply a gentle pressure. While on tight spot, slowly flex and extend the toes, making a fist with the toes and pointing the toes up.
- Find a different tight area and rotate the leg internally and externally to help work out any knots in the bottom of the foot.
- Repeat the process on the other foot.



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