

Plantar fasciitis

Information for patients



What is plantar fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis is the most common cause of heel pain. It is also referred to as plantar fasciopathy or plantar heel pain. The word 'plantar' refers to the bottom of your foot, and fascia is a type of fibrous tissue.

So, plantar fasciitis means there is irritation of the tissue at the bottom of your foot. The plantar fascia runs from the heel to the toes. It absorbs shock for the foot when walking and running and supports the arch of the foot.

What causes the pain?

The plantar fasciitis becomes painful through increased load on the foot; for example, a new activity, hobby or new shoes. Increased weight can also cause the pain. Pain from using your foot does not mean you are causing damage to the tissues.

Symptoms

- Pain in the heel, and sometimes into the arch of the foot.
- More painful when taking first steps in the morning or after sitting.
- Painful to press on the heel.

How long will I have it?

Plantar fasciitis can sometimes take a long time to heal as the fascia has a poor blood supply, healing can be slow and varied. Most people will see an improvement in the first few months.

Treatment

Plantar fasciitis can be treated by a physiotherapist with advice and exercise. Some people with plantar fasciitis access the podiatry service. You can be referred in via the GP or Physiotherapist, or you can self refer at this website:

www.leicspart.nhs.uk/service/podiatry/. Podiatry specialise in feet and can give advice on footwear or insoles as needed.

Some things that you can do to help manage your heel pain:

Footwear

Avoid wearing unsupportive shoes (e.g. ballet pumps, flip flops). Try to wear supportive shoes with a thick sole, especially for work and exercise. You could also try wearing a gel heel cup. These can be purchased online, or from your local pharmacy.

Weight management

We know that being overweight/obese puts more pressure on your joints and tissues and can cause you more pain. There is a lot of help available if you are keen to try and lose weight. **Active Lifestyle** - you need to be referred into this by your GP or physio. You can self refer into **LEAP** for a free NHS weight management programme on 0116 222 7154. You can also visit the NHS website at for more advice: www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/start-the-nhs-weight-loss-plan/

Activity management

If some activities are increasing your pain, then break them down into smaller tasks, with rests in between. This should reduce irritation as a whole. It is not helpful in managing your

foot pain, to completely stop your activities. A balance is needed, including exercise, to allow you to continue daily activities.

Exercises

The following exercises should improve your ability to complete daily activities. The stretch can help to loosen the tissues in the painful area, improving movement.

Level One:

Place a towel underneath the balls of your feet to raise the toes up. Go up on your toes like in the picture, then slowly lower your heels down off the edge of the step. Return to starting position.

Repeat 10-12 times. Complete 3 sets. You should complete 3 seconds up, 2 seconds hold, 3 seconds down. 3 times a week.



Level Two:

As in level 1, but do this standing on one leg at a time, with the affected foot on the step.

Repeat 10-12 times. Complete 3 sets. You should complete 3 seconds up, 2 seconds hold, 3 seconds down. 3 times a week.



Level Three:

As level 2 but add weight by wearing a rucksack filled with books or something else heavy.

Repeat 10-12 times. Complete 3 sets. You should complete 3 seconds up, 2 seconds hold, 3 seconds down. 3 times a week

Consider reducing the repetitions initially as you increase the weight.



Long-toe flexor stretch

With your foot supported, pull your toes back to feel a stretch in the bottom of your foot. Hold for 10 seconds.

Repeat 10 times. Once a day.



Calf stretch

Standing with both feet pointing forwards as in the picture, gently bend your front knee and keep your painful foot flat to the floor. You should feel the stretch in the back of your calf muscle. Hold for 30 seconds.

Repeat 5 times. Once a day.



Self massage

As well as the stretch and strengthening exercises, you can massage the bottom of your foot. This loosens the tight structures and reduces sensitivity.

Do this by rolling your foot back and forth over either a rolling pin or tennis ball or frozen water bottle. This can be sore but should ease throughout the exercise and as you get used to it.

Spend about 5 minutes a day on this.



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