

HEALTH IN OUR HANDS!

The Arkansas State University Wellness Program Newsletter
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Skin Cancer

Plantar Fasciitis

Overview

Plantar fasciitis is the most common cause of heel pain. The plantar fascia is the flat band of tissue (ligament) that connects your heel bone to your toes. It supports the arch of your foot. If you strain your plantar fascia, it gets weak, swollen, and irritated (inflamed). Then your heel or the bottom of your foot hurts when you stand or walk.

Symptoms

Plantar fasciitis commonly causes stabbing pain that usually occurs with your very first steps in the morning. Once your foot limbers up, the pain of plantar fasciitis normally decreases, but it may return after long periods of standing or after getting up from a seated position. You may also have pain that gets worse when you climb stairs or stand on your toes. Discomfort can also happen at the beginning of exercise that gets better or goes away as exercise

continues but returns when exercise is completed.

Causes

Although the exact cause of plantar fasciitis is not well understood, conditions or activities that may lead to plantar fasciitis include:

- Things that affect how the feet work (biomechanical factors). These include abnormal inward twisting or rolling of the foot (pronation), high arches, flat feet, tight calf muscles, or tight tendons at the back of the heel (Achilles tendons).
- Repetitive activities, such as jobs that require prolonged walking or standing on hard or irregular surfaces or sports such as running.
- Things that put extra stress on the feet, such as being overweight or wearing shoes that are poorly cushioned, don't fit well, or are worn out.

- The natural process of aging. Plantar fasciitis is most common in middle-aged adults.
- In rare cases, a single injury to the foot.

Treatment

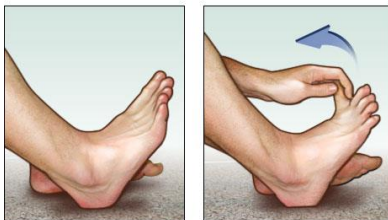
There are many methods you can try to relieve the heel pain of plantar fasciitis. Even though effectiveness has not been proven in scientific studies, these methods, used alone or in combination, work for most people.

- Rest your feet. Limit or, if possible, stop daily activities that are causing your heel pain. Try to avoid running or walking on hard surfaces, such as concrete.
- To reduce inflammation and relieve pain, put ice on your heel. You can also try a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) such as ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin, for example) or naproxen (Aleve, for example).

NSAIDs come in pills and in a cream that you rub over the sore area.

- Wear shoes with good shock absorption and arch support for your foot. Athletic shoes or shoes with a well-cushioned sole are usually good choices.
- Try heel cups or shoe inserts (orthotics) to help cushion your heel. You can buy these at many athletic shoe stores and drugstores. Use them in both shoes, even if only one foot hurts.
- Put on your shoes as soon as you get out of bed. Going barefoot or wearing slippers may make your pain worse.
- Do simple exercises such as toe stretches, calf stretches, and towel stretches several times a day, especially when you first get up in the morning. These can help your ligament become more flexible and strengthen the muscles that support your arch. (For towel stretches, you pull on both ends of a rolled towel that you place under the ball of your foot.)

Toe Stretches:



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Towel Stretch:



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Hold these positions for at least 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat 2 to 4 times a session, several times a day.

Prevention

The following steps will help prevent plantar fasciitis or help keep the condition from getting worse if you already have it:

- Take care of your feet. Wear shoes with good arch support and heel cushioning. If your work requires you to stand on hard surfaces, stand on a thick rubber mat to reduce stress on your feet.
- Do exercises to stretch the Achilles tendon at the back of the heel. This is especially important before sports, but it is helpful for non-athletes as well. Ask your doctor or physical therapist about recommendations for a stretching and/or strengthening routine.
- Stay at a healthy weight for your height and age.
- Establish good exercise habits. Increase your

exercise levels gradually, and wear supportive shoes.

- If you run, alternate running with other sports that will not cause as much heel impact such as bicycling or swimming.

References

- <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/plantar-fasciitis/basics/treatment/con-20025664>
- <http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/plantar-fasciitis-prevention>

Other News:

**If you have any suggestions for newsletter topics, please contact Dean Susan Hanrahan at hanrahan@astate.edu.

The Arkansas State University Employee Wellness Newsletter is published monthly during the academic year by the College of Nursing and Health Professions. Health questions can be addressed to Dean Susan Hanrahan, Ph.D., ext. 3112 or hanrahan@astate.edu. Produced by Kelsie Clark, graduate student in the College of Nursing and Health Professions, Physical Therapy Program.