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# Plantar Fasciitis – Everything You Need to Know

The most  
common cause of  
acquired plantar  
heel pain in adults.



## | What is the Plantar Fascia?

A band of strong connective tissue which runs the entire length of the foot, from heel to toe.

The plantar fascia has an important role in supporting the arch during both static and dynamic movement. It aids in shock absorption at heel strike creates a rigid foot lever to stabilise the foot for propulsion.



## | What is Plantar Fasciitis?

The plantar fascia is constantly under tension during anything that requires standing. Over time microtears within the tissue may develop. Due to constant pulling and stretching of the plantar fascia, inflammation may occur which often causes pain.

### Symptoms of Plantar Fasciitis:

Pain - can present differently for different people including; sharp, dull, aches or a bruised, tender feeling.

Symptoms of pain may present when taking your first few steps in the morning or after prolonged periods of rest. This is often thought to be due to the fascia being stretched and put under tension when initially putting your foot down. Walking upstairs can also be painful.



## | Predisposing Factors associated with Plantar Fasciitis:

The exact cause of Plantar Fasciitis is unknown, although it is thought to be multifactorial, with both intrinsic and extrinsic factors contributing to it. Frequently seen causes may include:-

- Occupations requiring prolonged periods of standing i.e. retail worker;
- Many sports which require shock absorption from the foot i.e. running, badminton, boxing, walking, athletics etc;
- Overtraining or increasing the intensity of training suddenly;
- Biomechanical imbalances, such as a high arched cavoid foot, which can reduce the ability of the foot to absorb shock adequately, leading to the plantar fascia becoming shorter and tight. In contrast, excessive pronation during the gait cycle to help stabilise the arch before toe off may put excessive strain through the plantar fascia;
- Overweight- overweight individuals may put excessive strain on the plantar fascia;
- Inappropriate footwear i.e. flat shoes, shoes without a fastening (laces, velcro);
- Tight calves.

## | Diagnosis of Plantar Fasciitis:

Diagnosis of plantar fasciitis requires a detailed lifestyle, family and medical history. It is important to seek help from an appropriate medical professional i.e. a podiatrist. Despite Plantar Fasciitis being the most common cause of heel pain, there are many other differential diagnoses which cause heel pain i.e. calcaneal fracture, nerve entrapment, fat-pad contusion, heel spur etc, so it is important that a correct diagnosis is given.



## Treatment for Plantar Fasciitis:

Seek podiatric assistance for orthoses if required. This could be a simple orthosis to help with shock attenuation or a custom-made orthosis to help with biomechanical imbalances.

Podiatrists will also be able to advise treatment and lifestyle changes to help alleviate symptoms and prevent recurrence, such as:-

- Changing footwear - laces or velcro fastening help to support and hold the foot better. Additionally, shoes with a small heel take strain away from the plantar fascia;
- Calf stretches to reduce tightness;
- Weight loss;

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- Wearing shoes indoors, avoiding being barefoot;
- Reducing or modifying activity - non-weightbearing activities such as cycling and swimming can help maintain fitness while reducing impact through the plantar fascia;
- Trying to rest as much as possible;
- Rolling out the fascia with a massage ball or rolling pin can help to release and warm-up the fascia (especially before putting your foot down first thing in the morning);
- Ice - placing your foot flat on the ground with ice underneath can help reduce pain;
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatories - can help to reduce pain and inflammation (for short-term use only).
- Ensure you always have good quality shock-absorbing insoles in all your shoes e.g. Enertor Comfort insoles.

## Outcome for Plantar Fasciitis:

Research has shown that on average it takes 9 months for Plantar Fasciitis to heal. If you do find that symptoms improve faster, there is no harm continuing with treatment to ensure that the Plantar Fasciitis has healed.





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