

PLANTAR FASCIITIS

WHAT IS PLANTAR FASCIITIS?

Plantar fasciitis is a painful but very common condition resulting from damage to a band of tissue on the bottom of the foot. This tissue is a fascia, specifically called the plantar fascia, and is a strong, fibrous structure that connects the heel bone to the base of the toes. One of its functions is to help maintain the arch. Plantar fasciitis is sometimes called 'Policeman's heel'.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Most commonly pain and stiffness are felt around the heel and this may extend towards the arch of the foot. The pain may be dull or sharp, or it may be of an aching nature. The pain is usually worse first thing in the morning, following periods of rest, or during intense activity. It may be severe enough to cause you to limp.

WHO EXPERIENCES PLANTAR FASCIITIS?

Plantar fasciitis is a very common problem that tends to occur more commonly in women than in men, and often affects those within a certain age range. However, anyone can get it and it may affect both the sporty and sedentary alike. The overweight, or those that have unusually high or low foot arches may also be particularly vulnerable.

WHAT CAUSES PLANTAR FASCIITIS?

Suddenly increasing activity levels, or being overweight, can increase your likelihood of getting plantar fasciitis. A tight Achilles tendon or the inflexibility of the surrounding foot and leg musculature can contribute, as can poor footwear (for example wearing Ballet pumps). Heel 'spurs' generally do not cause Plantar fasciitis. Your podiatrist may request x-rays or imaging to rule out other causes of your heel pain.

HOW LONG WILL PLANTAR FASCIITIS LAST?

This is a very difficult question to answer – it depends on many factors and will differ from person to person. Following clinical advice, changing your footwear and losing some weight will all contribute to hastening recovery.

It is often encouraging when the patient begins to experience a decrease in their pain first thing in the morning. Plantar fasciitis is often self-limiting and can sometimes resolve spontaneously.

HOW SHOULD PLANTAR FASCIITIS BE MANAGED?

Painkillers can help in the short term to break the cycle of pain. The treatment plan will usually involve stretching, resting, icing, a change of footwear, night

splints, strapping or insoles. If these treatments do not work, we may recommend the use of immobilisation and/or steroidal injections. Surgery is rare, but may be worth considering in stubborn, long-standing, or severe cases.

STRETCHING

The rationale behind stretching is to improve the flexibility of the calf muscles in order to reduce the load transferred from the Achilles tendon to the associated plantar fascia. Stretching is an activity that is often overlooked but is very important in helping you recover.

This leaflet has been written to help you understand more about the problem with your foot. This leaflet is not a substitute for professional medical advice and should be used in conjunction with verbal information and treatment given.

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