

Plantar Fasciitis (Common Cause of Heel Pain)

Edited By Christopher DiGiovanni MD

What is it?

- Plantar Fasciitis is the most common cause of heel pain
- The plantar fascia is a strong fibrous tissue that originates on the heel bone (calcaneus) and extends across the sole of the foot
- This fascial band often tightens over time and/or with activity
- Painful microtearing of fascia can occur with repetitive weight-bearing
- Pain occurs due to the body's natural inflammatory response to microtearing (normal healing response)

Pain in the heel is the classic symptom particularly:

- First thing in the morning after one takes his or her initial steps
- With sudden use after sitting after sitting for a prolonged period
- At the base of the heel and along the mid arch
- Tends to improve with use, but worsens after prolonged standing

Risk factors for plantar fasciitis include:

- Recent change in activity level (ex. New workouts)
- A job or lifestyle requiring prolonged standing
- Middle aged (natural degeneration/contracture of fascia over time)
- Excess body weight (increases load through fascia)
- Tight calf muscle
- Previous history of plantar fasciitis (tends to be chronic)
- Runners, pregnancy

Treatment

- Plantar fasciitis can be successfully treated without surgery in the VAST majority of cases.
- Non-Operative treatment includes:
 - *Calf stretching* with the knee straight, foot forward for a total of 3-5 minutes per day (ex. 6-10 sets of 30 seconds) x 6 weeks
 - *Plantar Fascia stretching* for a total of 3-5 minutes/day
 - *Activity modification* including:
 - Stop any inciting activity (ex running on hard surfaces)
 - Looking for opportunities to sit more
 - Change shoe wear if necessary
 - *Weight Loss*
 - *Anti-Inflammatory Medication* (NSAIDs)
 - *Comfort shoes* with a stiff sole
 - *Over-the-counter orthotic* with arch support & soft surface
 - *Plantar fascia night splint* x 2-3 weeks
 - Local corticosteroid injection
- Due to the high rate of success of non-operative treatment surgical treatment is usually reserved for patients that have failed 6-12 months of *appropriate* non-operative treatment
- A maintenance program is required after symptoms have settled
- Some discomfort may persist for months, patience is required

Typical Pain location in Plantar Fasciitis



Non-Operative Treatment:

Calf stretching -knee straight



Plantar Fascia Stretch

