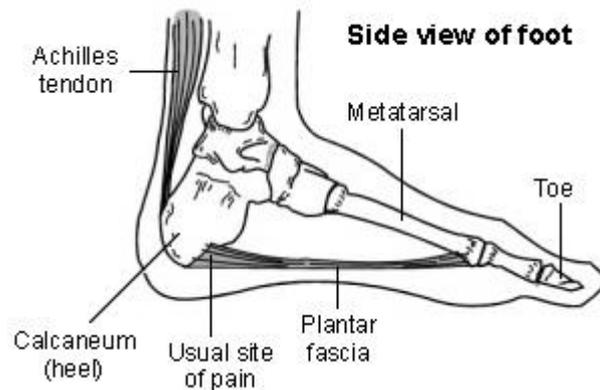


Plantar Fasciitis Information Leaflet

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What is plantar fasciitis?

The plantar fascia is a strong band of tissue that stretches from the heel to the toes. It supports the arch of the foot and also acts as a shock-absorber in the foot. Repetitive small injuries to the fascia is thought to be the cause of plantar fasciitis. Plantar fasciitis means inflammation of the plantar fascia. The injury is usually near to where the plantar fascia attaches to the heel bone.

What are the symptoms of plantar fasciitis?

Pain is the main symptom. It is often worst when first used in the morning or after long periods where no weight is placed on the foot. Gentle exercise may ease things a little as the day goes by, but a long walk often makes the pain worse. Sudden stretching of the sole of the foot may make the pain worse. For example, walking up stairs or on tip-toes. You may limp because of pain. Some people have plantar fasciitis in both feet at the same time.

Who gets plantar fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis is quite common (1 in 10). It mainly affects people over 40 and seems to be more common in women. However, it can occur at any age. It is also common in athletes. Situations where it is more likely include the following:

- If you do lots of walking, running, standing, etc, when you are not used to it. Conversely, people with a sedentary lifestyle are also more prone to plantar fasciitis.
- If you have recently started exercising on a different surface. For example, running on the road instead of a track.
- Wearing shoes with poor cushioning or poor arch support.
- Sudden gains in weight or being overweight will put extra strain on the heel.
- Overuse or sudden stretching of the sole. For example: athletes who increase their running intensity or distance; poor technique starting 'off the blocks', etc.
- Tightness of the Achilles tendon.

Often there is no apparent cause. A common wrong belief is that the pain is due to a bony growth or 'spur' coming from the heel bone (calcaneum). Many people have a bony spur of the heel bone but not everyone with this gets plantar fasciitis.

What is the treatment for plantar fasciitis?

Usually the inflammation and pain will ease in time. Fascia tissue, like ligament tissue, heals quite slowly. **It may take several months for the pain to settle.**

However, the following treatments may help to speed recovery. There is no one specific treatment that appears stand out as the best. A combination of different treatments may help.

Rest the foot

This should be done as much as possible. Avoid running, excess walking or standing, and undue stretching of the sole. Gentle walking and exercises described below are fine.

Footwear

Do not walk barefoot on hard surfaces. Choose shoes with cushioned heels and a good arch support. A laced sports shoe rather than open sandals is probably best.

Avoid old or worn shoes that may not give a good cushion to the heel.

Heel pads

You can buy various pads and shoe inserts to cushion the heel and support the arch of your foot. These work best if you **put them in your shoes at all times.**

Exercises

Regular gentle stretching of the Achilles tendon and the plantar fascia seems to ease the symptoms in some people. This is because most people with plantar fasciitis have a slight tightness of the Achilles tendon. This tends to pull at the back of the heel and have a knock-on effect of keeping the plantar fascia tight. Also, when you are asleep overnight, the plantar fascia tends to tighten up (which is why it is usually most painful first thing in the morning). The aim of the exercises is to gently loosen up the tendons and fascia above and below the heel.

The following exercises can be used to help treat plantar fasciitis:

Towel Stretch

First thing in the morning loop a towel, a piece of elastic or a tubigrip around the ball of your foot and, keeping your knee straight, pull your toes towards your nose, holding for 30 seconds. Repeat 5 times for each foot.



Calf/Achilles Stretch

Face the wall, put both hands on the wall at shoulder height, and keep one foot in front of the other. The front foot should be approximately 30 cm (12 inches) from the wall. With the front knee bent and the back knee straight, lean into the stretch (i.e. towards the wall) until a tightening is felt in the calf of the back leg, and then ease off. Repeat 10 times. Now change the position of feet & bring the back foot in front & front foot back. Repeat these stretches 10 times. These must be done twice a day.



Stair Stretch

Holding the stair-rail for support, with legs slightly apart, position the feet so that both heels are off the end of the step. Lower the heels, keeping the knees straight, until a tightening is felt in the calf. Hold this position for 20–60 seconds. Repeat 5 times, at least twice a day.



Toe Stretch

Sit on the floor with knee bent. Pull the toes back on the injured foot until stretch across the arch is felt. Hold and repeat.



Roller Pin/ Cold can roll

Roll your bare foot back and forth from the tip of the toes to the heel over a frozen juice can. This is a good exercise after activity because not only stretches the plantar fascia but provides cold therapy to the injured area.



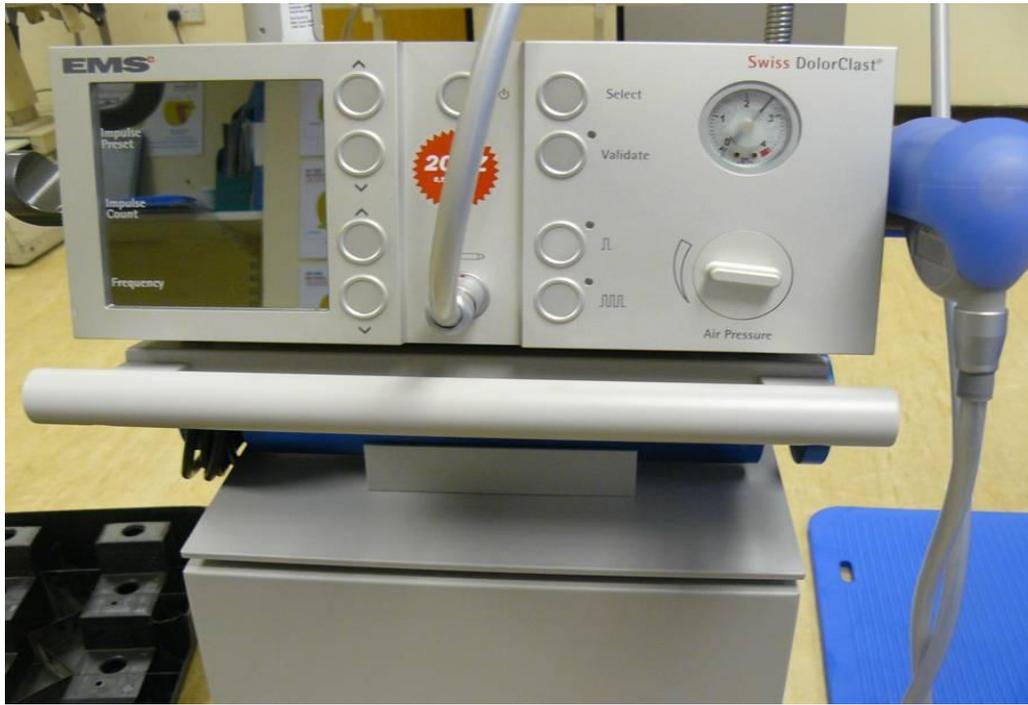
Injections

A steroid (cortisone) injection is sometimes tried if the pain remains bad despite the above measures. It may relieve the pain in some people for several weeks but does not always cure the problem. It is not always successful and may be sore to have done. Steroid injections do carry some risks including (rarely) rupture of the plantar fascia.

Night Splint treatment

Some people benefit from wearing a special splint overnight to keep the Achilles tendon and plantar fascia slightly stretched. The aim is to prevent the plantar fascia from tightening up overnight.

Extracorporeal shock-wave therapy



High pressure sound waves directed at the plantar fascia may be used to stimulate healing if other treatments have failed. This requires a series of treatment (usually three sessions at weekly intervals). NICE has suggested that this should be used only after other conservative measures have failed and the duration of symptoms is six months or more.



Can plantar fasciitis be prevented?

There are certain things that you can do to try to prevent plantar fasciitis, especially if you have had it before. These include:

- Regularly changing trainers used for running or walking.
- Wearing shoes with good cushioning in the heels and good arch support.
- Losing weight if you are overweight.
- Regularly stretching the plantar fascia and Achilles tendon (see exercises above), especially before exercise.
- Avoid exercising on hard surfaces.