

Plantar Fasciitis

(Sole of foot heel pain)

Information and Exercise Leaflet for Patient's and Carers

What is Plantar Fasciitis?

The **plantar fascia** is a sheet or broad band of fibrous tissue in the sole of the foot, underneath your skin.

Plantar fasciitis is inflammation of this tissue, causing pain and discomfort along the sole of the foot and in the heel, particularly on weight bearing.

What is the Cause?

Risk factors include:

- Being overweight
- Inappropriate and poorly cushioned footwear
- Constantly being on your feet, especially on a hard surface
- Reduced ankle movement, e.g. tight calf muscles
- Poor foot posture
- Previous trauma to the foot

What is the Treatment?

Exercises are the first line of treatment which will mainly involve stretching.

Some patients may be referred to other health professionals to consider insoles for footwear.

Do I need an X-ray?

As X-rays only show bones, having an X-ray would not change the overall management of your *plantar fasciitis*.

At the site of the inflamed *plantar fascia* attachment, some extra bone may form producing a small "spur".

These heel spurs are more common in people with *plantar fasciitis* but the spur itself is not the cause of pain.

What can I do to help myself?

Footwear:

- Try to wear cushioned footwear (i.e. trainers) with good support to avoid excess forces through the foot.
- Try to avoid walking barefoot on hard surfaces as this may aggravate your pain.

Activity Level:

- Prolonged walking and prolonged standing should be avoided as much as possible to reduce irritation to the foot.
- If you do regular exercise, try and do low-impact activities such as cycling or swimming to allow the tissues to rest.
- Complete rest is generally not advisable. It is advisable to walk as normally as possible as this helps the *fascia* to heal correctly.

Stretches:

As advised by your Physiotherapist.

Exercise 1



- Place the affected leg at the back ensuring the foot is pointing directly forwards.
- With the knee straight and the heel on the floor, lean forwards slightly.
- You should feel a stretch at the top of the calf.
- Hold for 30 seconds and do 3 repetitions.

Exercise 2

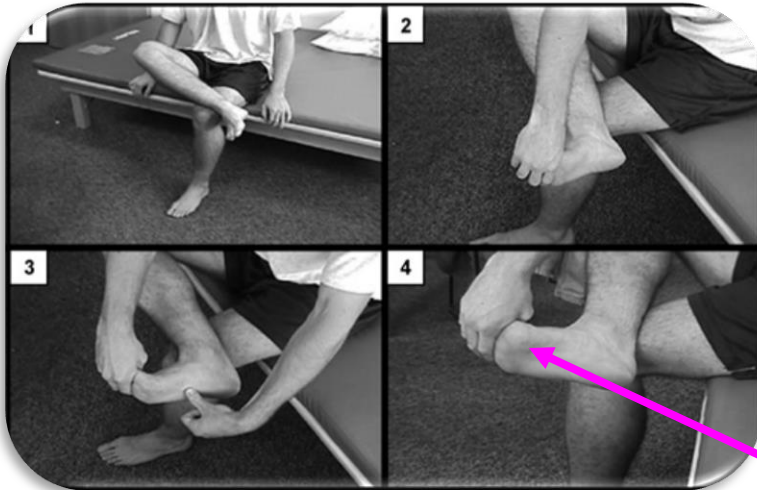


- Place the affected leg at the back ensuring the foot is pointing directly forwards.
- Bend both knees to feel a stretch in the lower calf of the back leg.
- Hold for 30 seconds and do 3 repetitions

Non Weight Bearing Stretches

- Each stretch should be held for 10 seconds and repeated 10 times, 3 times a day.
- The first set of stretches should be done before taking the first step in the morning.
- They should also be completed after a period of rest prior to walking in addition to the 3 sessions per day.

Exercise 3



- In sitting cross your affected leg over your other leg.
- Place your fingers across the base of your toes then pull your toes towards your shin until you can feel a stretch on the inside arch of your foot.
- Confirm you are completing the stretch correctly by feeling for tension in the plantar fascia.

Ice:

Ice may be used to give you pain relief and help decrease any inflammation in the tissues.

- Apply the ice to the heel for 15 minutes, up to 3 times per day.
- Use an ice pack wrapped in a wet towel.
- **DO NOT** use if you have any circulatory problems or poor skin sensation.
- If the skin becomes uncomfortable during the ice application, remove immediately.

Painkillers:

Consult your GP or local pharmacist who will advise you on which medication is suitable for you to take.

Please note that it may take your symptoms 7 – 14 days to begin to respond to the stretches.

Plantar Fasciitis may need 3 – 4 months of stretches to fully settle.

Integrated Musculoskeletal Service		Author: Physiotherapy AS/MN	
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Contact details			
Physiotherapy Department Burnley General Hospital – Tel: 01282 8043294		Physiotherapy Department Royal Blackburn Hospital – Tel: 01254 735091	