

Plantar Fasciitis

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What Is Plantar Fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis is one of the most common causes of heel pain. It occurs when the plantar fascia—a thick band of tissue that runs along the bottom of the foot and supports the arch—becomes irritated from repeated stress and overuse. Although the condition has traditionally been called "plantar fasciitis," it is often caused by wear and tear of the tissue rather than active inflammation.

Common Symptoms

Symptoms may include:

- Sharp pain in the bottom of the heel
- Pain that is worst with the first few steps in the morning
- Pain after getting up from sitting for a long period of time
- Aching or burning discomfort in the heel or arch of the foot
- Increased pain after prolonged standing, walking, or exercise
- Symptoms that may improve after moving around but return later in the day

What Causes It?

Several factors can increase the risk of developing plantar fasciitis, including:

- Tight calf muscles
- Flat feet or high arches
- Prolonged standing or walking
- Running or repetitive impact activities
- Sudden increases in activity level
- Improper footwear

How Is It Diagnosed?

Diagnosis is usually made through a health history and physical examination. Additional testing is not usually necessary but may include:

- **X-rays** to rule out other causes of heel pain
- **Ultrasound or MRI** in chronic or unusual cases

Treatment Options

Most people improve with conservative treatment.

Conservative Care

- Manual therapy and soft tissue treatment
- Custom or over-the-counter orthotics
- Supportive footwear
- Stretching exercises for the foot and calf muscles
- Strengthening exercises for the foot and lower leg
- Night splints to gently stretch the foot during sleep
- Ice application for pain relief
- Gradual return to activity

Medical Treatment

For persistent symptoms, additional options may include:

- Anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs)
- Corticosteroid injections
- Surgery in rare, severe cases that do not respond to conservative care

What Is the Outlook?

The outlook is generally very good.

- Most patients improve with conservative treatment.
- Recovery may take several weeks to several months.
- Consistent stretching, supportive footwear, and activity modification can help speed recovery and reduce the chance of symptoms returning.

Typical Treatment Schedule

Many patients are seen:

- **2–3 visits per week for 4–6 weeks**
- Progress is reassessed regularly and treatment is adjusted as needed

Continuing your home stretching and strengthening program is one of the most important factors for long-term success.

Contact Your Healthcare Provider If You Experience:

- Severe or worsening foot pain
- Significant swelling, redness, or warmth
- Numbness or weakness in the foot
- Difficulty walking or bearing weight
- Symptoms that do not improve with treatment