

Advice and exercises for pain on the bottom of your foot (plantar fascia pain)

Department of Physiotherapy

Information for Patients

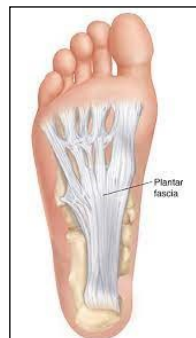
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Introduction

Plantar fascia is a layer of strong connective tissue under the skin layer on the bottom of your feet. If this becomes painful it is called plantar fasciitis or more correctly plantar fasciosis. Pain is commonly found under or around the heel. It may spread to the middle of the foot. Pain is often described as a burning or throbbing feeling. It is often worse when getting up after a nap, or when first getting out of bed.



Causes of plantar fascia pain in the bottom of the foot

- work or activities which involve standing or walking for long periods.
- doing more action sports such as running, jumping.
- tightness in the Achilles tendon, calf and back of the thigh (hamstring) muscles
- high heels can affect the length in the calf muscles, Achilles tendon and the plantar fascia layer in the foot.
- very flat shoes (flip flops or ballet pumps), do nothing to support the arch or cushion the sole from the ground. Also, feet and ankles are not as well supported by these shoes.
- getting older, mostly if your job involves a lot of standing and walking.

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To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

- having flat feet
- being overweight may worsen pain symptoms

How is plantar fascia pain in the bottom of the foot managed?

A clinician will diagnose plantar fascia pain from the symptoms you describe and by gently feeling the tender area. This condition is usually well managed with exercise and advice (see below). If you still feel pain, an ultrasound or MRI scan may be booked to look at the plantar fascia more closely.

Common scan findings include

- a thickened plantar fascia and extra bone where the plantar fascia joins the heel called a spur. This is often found on x-rays of people who do not have plantar fascia pain. It is not known what role heel spurs make to plantar fascia pain.

How can I help myself?

These tips may help you to take care of the pain in your foot:

- Half fill a bottle of water and freeze. Roll the sole of your foot on the ice bottle for 15 minutes a few times per day to aid pain relief.

Please note: If you have a poor feeling in your foot due to diabetic foot conditions, do not use this method.

- take pain relief as advised by your pharmacist or clinician (oral or topical gel cream)
- wear comfortable shoes. Trainers with a cushioned sole are the best. They give proper support and cushion the sole of the foot.
- an insole or heel pad placed in your shoe may help pain when walking and standing
- take regular rest breaks from standing or walking when you can
- do not spend too much time doing action sports, like running. Gentle exercise such as yoga or pilates may speed up your healing, and keep you active whilst you recover.
- if you are overweight, try to loose weight. By doing this, you will lessen the force of your weight on the bottom of your foot.
- insoles for your shoes, which you can buy yourself or organise through a clinician or GP may cushion your foot and help with your recovery.
- try the exercises in this leaflet

What should I do if none of these things help?

Contact your GP. In many GP surgeries there are First Contact Practitioners, who are experts in treating this condition. They may be able to help you get better. But, if none of this helps with your pain, you may need to refer to another service.

Try these exercises up to 3 times daily.



Exercise 1

Put a towel around the bottom of your foot. Hold each end of the towel. Move your foot up and pull up further using the towel.

Hold 5 seconds. Repeat up to 10 times



Exercise 2

In sitting, draw your toes towards your heel, raising the inside arch of your foot.

Hold 5 seconds. Repeat up to 10 times

Or, you can try lifting objects up with your toes like marbles



Exercise 3

Sitting, rest your affected foot on your other thigh. Hold your heel in 1 hand, and your toes in the other hand. Pull your toes up towards your shin. Hold 5 to 10 seconds. Repeat 5 times.

Strengthening exercises

Start these exercises at 2 to 3 weeks if your symptoms are improving.



Exercise 4

Place your affected toes against a wall with your knee straight. Feel the stretch in your plantar fascia and calf muscles.

Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat 3 to 5 times. Repeat as above, this time with your knee bent.



Exercise 5

Stand on a step and hold onto a wall or rail. Let your affected heel hang off the end of the step and bend both knees to stretch the plantar fascia or calf muscles

Repeat this exercise keeping the knee of your affected side straight.

Hold 20 to 30 seconds. Repeat 3 to 5 times.



Exercise 6

Stand holding onto support. Keep both knees bent throughout the exercise. Push up onto your toes, lifting your heels, then your lower heels. Try to keep your knees bent until you have completed the repetitions. Hold 5 seconds. Repeat up to 10 times



Exercise 7

Stand holding onto support. Keep both knees bent throughout the exercise. Push up onto your toes, lifting your heels, then your lower heels. Try to keep your knees bent until you have completed the repetitions. Hold 5 seconds. Repeat up to 10 times

Progression: repeat exercise standing on your affected leg only

Returning to normal function

Low impact exercise (swimming, cycling and walking) may help you to exercise more comfortably at first. If your symptoms get better, start slowly introducing your normal activities.

Contact details

Physiotherapy department

Glenfield Hospital 0116 258 3595

Leicester General Hospital 0116 258 4070

Leicester Royal Infirmary 0116 258 5816

Opening times: 08:30am to 4:30pm Monday to Friday

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Previous reference:

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