

Heel pain (Plantar Fasciitis/Fasciopathy) self-management guide

Information for patients



If any of the advice given in this leaflet makes your symptoms worse or creates a new pain, please stop and seek advice.

Podiatry telephone number: **0131 536 1627**

What is Plantar Fasciopathy?

Plantar Fasciopathy is a very common condition characterised by pain in the bottom of your heel from a structure called the Plantar Fascia. The Plantar Fascia is a strong band which provides support and stability to your foot.

Causes

Some of the most common causes of Plantar Fasciopathy are as follows:

- Wearing ill-fitting or badly styled footwear, such as: high heels, hard thin soles or soles that are too soft
- If you have recently started being more active/increased your activity level
- Activities/occupations that involve placing large amounts of pressure and or strain on the foot and ankle, such as running or jumping
- Tight or weak muscles in the lower leg and or foot
- Being overweight
- Direct injury
- Foot deformity
- Arthritis in the foot or ankle
- Some underlying medical conditions.

Signs and symptoms

- Pain on initial steps after a period of rest, particularly first thing in the morning
- Pain can often feel better during exercise but worse after
- Pain can worsen the longer you are on your feet.

What can I do to help myself?

It is important to try to work out what leads to your pain. Avoiding the causes or triggers of painful symptoms is one of the most important parts of helping your recovery.

Consider the following options:

Footwear

The shoe style you wear should accommodate the width and shape of your foot and have semi rigid soles- avoid narrow, pointed shoes. The heel height should be between 1cm and 4 cm and preferably have a firm fastening such as lacing. People often find **avoiding** very flat shoes helpful.

Gel heel cushions

You may wish to purchase these to use in your shoes. These are helpful if you have little or no fat on the sole of your heel.

Modify activity levels

It is good to keep moving and exercising but you may benefit from considering alternative ways of keeping active temporarily. Lower impact activities (such as cycling or swimming) may be a good option for you. If this does not help a period of rest may be suitable.

Ice packs and massage

Roll a frozen bottle of water under your foot and heel or apply an ice pack for 20 minutes 2-3 times daily. Alternatively, use an ice pack to the most painful area (ensure ice is not applied directly to your skin- a cloth or towel may be a useful barrier).

Aim for a healthy body weight

Being overweight increases pressure and strain to the affected area and could reduce your chances of successful resolution. If you need support with this please speak with your GP or the Get Moving Service.

Pain medication

Some pain medication may help to reduce your symptoms and help you to move more comfortably. Discuss this with your Pharmacist or GP.

Being patient

This is not always easy but we know it may take time for your symptoms to settle.

Exercises

Please see back page of this leaflet.

Exercises



Plantar fascia stretch:

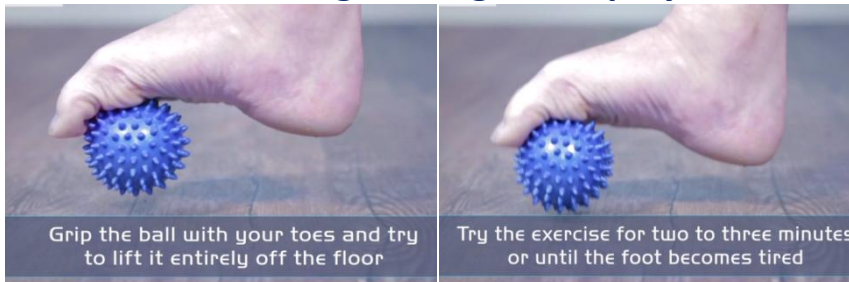
Place the affected foot on the opposite knee and pull your toes back towards you until a stretch is felt.

Hold for 10 seconds.

Repeat 10 times, 2-3 times daily.

Alternatively: If you have difficulty reaching your toes, try using a towel. With one end in each hand, place the middle of the towel around the underside of your foot and pull the toes up. (see image above)

Foot intrinsic strengthening with spiky ball



Grip the ball with your toes and try to lift it entirely off the floor

Try the exercise for two to three minutes or until the foot becomes tired

Find intrinsic strengthening exercises on: www.healthystep.co.uk/advice/exercise-therapy-ball/

Calf stretching and strengthening are also helpful – please see ‘*Musculoskeletal conditions of the foot and ankle*’ leaflet for these or use the web links below. A spiky ball can be purchased from online retailers.

What if my symptoms fail to resolve?

If after 6 weeks following the above advice your problem has not improved seek advice from a Podiatrist.

Useful Apps

NHS 24 MSK help

Useful web links

For further exercises and information

- www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints/exercises/exercises-for-foot-problems
- www.healthystep.co.uk/advice-hub/heel-pain-treatment/
- <https://livewellwithpain.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/10-footsteps-v2.pdf>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3F5Sly9JQao&feature=emb_logo
- www.edinburghleisure.co.uk/get-moving
- https://policyonline.nhslothian.scot/Policies/PatientInformation/Plantar_fasciopathy.pdf

