

# Sever's Disease self-management guide

## Information for patients



You have been given this information leaflet to help you understand more about the problems you are having and to provide some advice on what you can do to help your symptoms.

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

Podiatry telephone number: **0131 536 1627**

### What is Sever's Disease?

Sever's Disease (sometimes known as Calcaneal Apophysitis) is a condition characterised by pain around the heel bone. The condition affects children/teenagers at growth spurts and/or who participate in activities such as football, running and jumping. It usually affects girls aged 8 – 10 years and boys aged 10 – 14 years, although this can happen at any stage while growing. This can occur many times while you are growing.

### Causes of Sever's disease

Some of the most common causes of Sever's disease pain are as follows:

- Growth spurts- the long bones of the leg grow at a faster rate than the muscles that are around them. This causes tight calf muscles which pull on the Achilles tendon causing heel pain
- Sport and activity involving running and/or jumping
- Low levels of Vitamin D may be a contributing factor.

### Signs and symptoms

- Pain on the back of the heel sometimes with visible swelling
- Can affect both heels or one heel
- Pain can be made worse when running or jumping
- The pain is often worse in flat shoes
- The pain improves with rest.

## How is the condition diagnosed?

The podiatrist will diagnose the condition during an assessment and detailed history taking. In most cases x-rays or scans are not needed.

## 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.

### 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

Apply an ice pack to the painful site for 20 minutes 2-3 times daily (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 symptoms to settle.

### Exercises

Please see back page of this leaflet.

## What if my symptoms fail to resolve?

If after 6 weeks of following the advice in this leaflet your problem has not improved, seek advice from a Podiatrist.

## Exercises



### Ankle mobility:

Pull the foot up as far as it will go, hold for 5 seconds and then point to the floor and hold again.

Repeat 10 times and do this 2 – 3 times daily.



### Calf stretch:

Keep your rear foot heel on the ground, toes pointing forward and knee straight. Lean forward until a stretch is felt in the calf.

Hold still for 20- 30 seconds if comfortable. Repeat 3-4 times a day.

## 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](http://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints/exercises/exercises-for-foot-problems)
- <https://livewellwithpain.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/10-footsteps-v2.pdf>
- [https://policyonline.nhslothian.scot/Policies/PatientInformation/Severs\\_Disease.pdf](https://policyonline.nhslothian.scot/Policies/PatientInformation/Severs_Disease.pdf)

