

Heel pads

Soft cushioned heel pads can help. If the heel is very tender a small hole can be cut at the site of the most tender spot. The heel pad can also help by raising the heel slightly which will reduce pulling on the calf muscle.

Painkillers

Painkillers such as paracetamol will often ease the pain. Sometimes anti-inflammatory medicines such as ibuprofen are useful (Check with your GP before taking) some people find a cream or gel containing an anti-inflammatory medicine can be helpful when applied to the heel.

Injections

A steroid (cortisone) injection is sometimes tried if the pain remains despite the above treatments. It may relieve the pain for several weeks, or even cure the problem. It is not always successful and may be sore to have done.

Surgery

Surgery may be considered in very difficult cases. It is usually only advised if the pain has not eased after 12 months of treatment. It is not always successful and should only be considered as a last resort.

Given time plantar fasciitis gets better on its own but only if the foot can be rested. It may take a year or more for the condition to clear completely, but about 90% of people with plantar fasciitis improve after 2 months of initial treatment.

More questions

If you have any questions about any aspect of Plantar Fasciitis please discuss them with your podiatrist or contact your Podiatry Department.

Your local NHS podiatry service

For more information about NHS Podiatry in Hertfordshire please visit our webpage at: www.hct.nhs.uk

or contact:

Hertfordshire Podiatry Service

Sandridge Gate Business Park
Ronsons Way
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Herts
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If you wish to see a private practitioner, we recommend practitioners who are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council and who describe themselves as a podiatrist or chiropodist. These are protected titles in law and may only be used by persons who are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.

For more information visit: www.hpc-uk.org

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Plantar Fasciitis

A guide for patients



This leaflet is about plantar fasciitis. Also known as policeman's heel and heel spur syndrome.

It aims to provide information on the causes and treatments of the condition.

What is plantar fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis is inflammation of the plantar fascia, which is a thick band of fibrous tissue that runs along the bottom of the foot. This is attached to the heel bone (Calcaneus) and fans out to attach to the ball of the foot (bottom of the metatarsal bones). It is an important structure to maintain the arch of the foot.

What causes Plantar fasciitis?

Typically, plantar fasciitis results from repeated trauma (or pulling) to the tissue where it attaches to the heel bone. Repeated trauma often results in small tears in the plantar fascia at or near the attachment to the heel. The result of the damage and inflammation is pain.

Plantar fasciitis usually starts as a dull, intermittent pain in the heel and may progress to sharp, constant pain. Often it is worse in the morning or after sitting, and then decreases as you begin to walk around. The pain usually increases after standing or walking for long periods of time, and at the beginning of a sporting activity.

Who gets plantar fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis is quite common. It mainly affects people over 40 and is more common in women.

Causes

Plantar fasciitis is usually caused by a change or increase in activities, no arch support in shoes, lack of flexibility in the calf muscles, being overweight, a sudden injury, using shoes with little cushioning on hard surfaces or spending too much time on the feet.

Treatment

Symptoms usually resolve more quickly when treatment is sought early. Your podiatrist will advise you on the best course of treatment, which may include:

Rest

Rest the foot as much as possible. Avoid running, excess walking or standing. Gentle exercise and stretching as described below are fine

Footwear

Choose shoes with cushioned heels and a good arch support. A laced sports shoe is ideal. Avoid old or worn shoes that may not give a good cushion to the heel.

Do not walk barefoot on hard surfaces.

Insoles

Insoles are recommended for feet that are very flat or very high arched. They help support the arch and relax the plantar fascia.

Ice

Applying ice after activity or at the end of the day will help reduce swelling and make the heel more comfortable the next morning. One method is to fill a plastic drinks bottle with water and freeze it. This is then placed under the heel and arch of the foot and rolled backwards and forwards for 5-10 minutes.

Massage

This is best carried out in the morning. Massage oil (e.g. baby oil) into the painful area using your thumbs. Do this for about 2-3 minutes

Stretches

Regular stretching of the Achilles tendon and the plantar fascia will help ease symptoms.

The aim of stretching is to loosen up the tendons and fascia above and below the heel.

Take up the position shown, ensuring that both feet are pointing forwards towards the wall. Keep the back leg straight and the heel of this leg on the floor, bend the front knee forward until you feel a stretch in the calf muscle of the back leg.



Hold this position for 30 seconds then relax.

Do this 5 times. Repeat this routine 2 or 3 times a day. If the stretch is painful do not lean as far towards the wall.

You may experience mild aches while stretching however Stretching should not be painful.

If you are experiencing pain during this stretching programme you are probably over-stretching and this could lead to damage to muscle and/or tendon tissue.