



Information for Patients:



Plantar Fasciopathy (aka plantar fasciitis)

WHAT IS PLANTAR FASCIOPATHY? It is a common foot condition that causes pain in the heel, across the sole of the foot and sometimes into the arch area of the foot too. It is caused by irritation of the 'plantar fascia' ligament connecting the heel to the ball of the foot and playing an important role in supporting the arch of your foot - taking the strain when you stand, walk or run.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS? The main symptom is pain in the heel. It can also sometimes be felt in the arch area of the foot. The pain can be described as sharp, burning and aching and is usually more noticeable when you stand on the foot, for example, when you get up from bed in the morning or when you stand after sitting for a while. It tends to become less noticeable after a few steps but it can return as the day goes on especially after long periods of standing or walking.

WHY DID I GET IT?

It can affect anyone but it is most common in people over the age of 40. There are many theories as to why people are affected, including straining the ligament by suddenly doing a lot of standing / walking or due to work patterns e.g. long factory shifts, being overweight, having flat or highly arched feet or tight calf muscles. As the development of plantar fasciitis can be work-related, jobs that require long periods of standing especially for 8 hours or more can make recovery time longer.

HOW CAN I TREAT MY PLANTAR FASCIITIS?

As with many foot and ankle conditions, plantar fasciopathy can in most instances be treated by you, at home, without the need to see a health professional. Please try some or all of the following:

- **Rest/modified activity:**

The aim is to reduce overloading of the plantar fascia by cutting back on activity you know will make the problem worse however day-to-day demands such as going to work and doing the daily chores can make resting your feet difficult so it may take a while to fully resolve, but by initially reducing your activity levels and gradually increasing them as the condition improves, you can make a full recovery.

Monitor your progress by the pain when you first put weight on your foot, such as getting up in the morning or standing after a long period of sitting. This pain may not completely disappear, but it should improve gradually on trying the suggested stretching and following the advice on footwear etc. Use the pain as your benchmark. If you get up one morning and it lasts longer or is more intense - then you have probably done too much so cut back if possible and keep doing some of the other self-help treatments such as ice and massage and stretching.

- **Ice & massage:** Massage of the heel and arch area can help ease the symptoms, though initially it can be tender to do so.

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The muscles around the plantar fascia can go into spasm and become tense. Massaging them can ease this and over time it should become more comfortable. You can use something such as a chilled small drinks bottle or can, or a golf or tennis ball to roll the foot over. Do this for about five minutes at a time, once or twice a day. You may also apply cold therapy after massaging the foot such as resting your foot on a pack of frozen peas covered with a cloth to protect the skin for five to ten minutes.

- **Weight Loss:** Try to achieve a healthy body weight for your height. This will reduce the loading on the plantar fascia.
- **Stretching:** A number of studies have shown stretching the foot and ankle to be effective in the treatment of plantar fasciitis.

Stretching should not be painful – you should feel a gentle stretch and then hold this for at least 30 seconds. As you stretch you will gradually start to feel the resistance ease as the tightness in your ligaments and muscles eases. Repeat this at least three to five times for each side and, if possible, try to do this more than once a day.

Please be patient: Some people feel an immediate improvement, whilst for others it takes a little longer depending on a number of factors such as being overweight and activity levels.

Exercise and stretching advice can be found on the NHS Inform website<http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/health-library/articles/h/heel-pain/introduction/#.Vr47xCyQFaU.link>

- **Footwear:** Unsupportive footwear, (such as flipflops or fashion pumps) has been found to contribute to developing plantar fasciitis. So check your regular footwear and, if necessary, change to a more supportive option which fits well and has some cushioning in the sole, especially the heel area. **For more information about choosing footwear, download the footwear information leaflet on the NHS Borders website** or via this link <http://www.healthy-footwear-guide.com/>

- **Taping:** Using a non-stretch tape to offload the plantar fascia can be helpful in the short term. Taping can also help in the recovery period by providing support for the fascia. Information on taping can be found on the Heel Fix Kit website.

- **Foot supports:** There is evidence to suggest that orthotics (foot supports) may also help and there are many different types available to buy over the counter, in chemist, sport or shoe shops. Alternatively, there are online suppliers such as www.simplyfeet.co.uk and www.heelfixkit.com which sell insoles and taping to the general public.

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- **Night splints:** Night splints work on the same principle as stretching.

Ideally they should be worn all night, but this is often impractical. If they can be worn for periods of 15-30 minutes at a time, several times a day, then this should have a similar effect. However, be warned these can take some getting used to and they do need to be worn for some time before any beneficial effects are experienced. Night splints can be very helpful with the pain on first weight bearing (e.g. getting out of bed/standing after a long period of sitting) and can help ease this symptom - particularly if worn before first standing - i.e. put it on 10 minutes before you get out of bed. Night splints can be purchased from websites such as www.simplyfeet.co.uk.

- **Compression Sock:** Foot compression socks can be worn as an alternative to night splints to maintain some stretch on the plantar fascia. They can also be worn through the day and are available from www.simplyfeet.co.uk.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

In the first instance you should give these first line treatments at least six to 12 weeks to have an effect.

If you are noticing improvement, you should continue these treatments until the symptoms have resolved. If in the future the same symptoms return, then restart the treatment above. Again, if the symptoms improve, continue until the symptoms resolve. If they do not improve then self-refer to your local NHS Borders Podiatry clinic using the online self-referral form or form available from your local GP practice.

Other information:

Shoes etc:

Wider Fit Shoes: www.widerfitshoes.co.uk Tel: 01933 311077

Simply Feet Tel: 0845 3700380 www.simplyfeet.co.uk

Heel Fix Kit: www.heelfixkit.com

Health and Wellbeing Information:

NHS Inform: Tel: 0800 224488 <http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/msk/>

Health and Wellbeing advice/support www.smallchangesbigdifference.org Tel: 0800 224488

Walk It – (supported walking activity)

http://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/1504/walking_cycling_and_horse_riding/311/walking_for_health Tel: 018350825060