

What is Plantar Fasciitis?

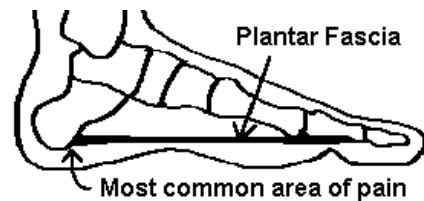
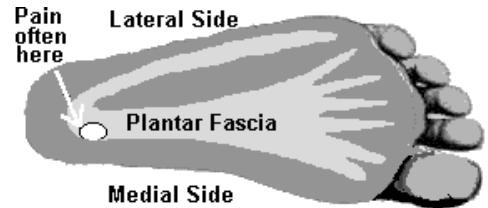


Plantar fasciitis (fashee-EYE-tis) is an inflammation of the plantar fascia, a band of connective tissue supporting the arch of the foot. The classic sign of plantar fasciitis is heel pain with the first few steps in the morning. The pain is usually in the heel or into the arch. Patients often report that the pain "moves around" and is worse after long period of standing or activity.

What is the Cause?

The cause of plantar fasciitis is often difficult to determine, but can be attributed to many of the following factors:

- Inadequate flexibility in the calf muscles and Achilles tendon.
- Recent change or sudden increase in activities.
- Poor arch support in footwear.
- Being overweight.
- Poor footwear. Using shoes with little cushion on hard surfaces and those that do not easily bend under the ball of the foot can increase pain.



What You Can Do...

Conservative care can provide relief of symptoms for 90 to 95 percent of people suffering from plantar fasciitis/heel pain syndrome. Most of the common and effective conservative treatments are listed below:



- **Rest.** Try to keep weight off your foot until the inflammation goes away. It's often difficult to know when you're overdoing it or which particular activity (like squatting or climbing stairs) caused the pain to increase again. Swimming is one of the few safe alternative exercises.
- **Stretching** the calf muscles and arches before getting out of bed in the morning and a few times per day is well-known to be a cure for many patients.
- **"Ice is nice" for soft-tissue injuries.** Both ice and stretching are quite effective because they treat the symptoms (pain and inflammation) as well as the cause (tightness of the plantar fascia and Achilles tendon). Freeze a bottle of water and roll it under your feet

for 5-10 minutes.

- **Appropriate footwear.** The right shoes can play a major role in relieving discomfort. A high quality running or walking shoe/sneaker with the proper balance of arch support and cushioning can often result in dramatic improvement. Products such as Birkenstock shoes and sandals can provide significant relief due to the form-fitting cork footbed.
- **Weight loss.** Decreasing pressure on the heel by reducing body weight can often be quite beneficial when it is appropriate and indicated.