



Taking Care of your Feet

# Plantar Fasciitis A Self Help Guide

Department of Podiatric Medicine



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# What is Plantar Fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis is a common condition that can cause pain under the heel. Pain can also be felt under the arch of the foot. The pain is often described as a sharp or knife-like pain.

It is often felt when you first stand up after having been off your feet for a while. It is usually worst when you first stand up in the morning. It may also cause trouble when you have been on your feet for a long time.

The diagram shows the plantar fascia which runs from under the ball of the foot and attaches to the heel bone (calcaneus). When the plantar fascia gets damaged inflammation can occur and this can cause pain.

If an x-ray is taken, this might show a calcaneal spur (heel spur). It is not usually this heel spur that causes the pain, as is usually thought. People that don't have plantar fasciitis can also have heel spurs. There are other reasons why you can get heel pain other than plantar fasciitis. Your Podiatrist will tell you if they suspect you have plantar fasciitis.





## What causes Plantar Fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis occurs when the plantar fascia gets damaged, usually when it gets over-stretched. Little tears can occur along the length of the plantar fascia, or where it attaches to the heel bone.

It is difficult to say what causes the pain in the first place, as it may be a few days before you start feeling the pain. It may have been something as small as:

- wearing a different pair of shoes than usual
- using your feet a bit more than usual such as playing sports or going for a long walk
- twisting your foot, stepping awkwardly or jumping

Some people are more likely to get plantar fasciitis due to their foot type or from having tight muscles.

## Will the pain go away?

Thankfully, most cases of plantar fasciitis will not last. With some people, the pain will only last a matter of weeks. Unfortunately, in some cases, the pain may last for many months. With some people, it may come and go for well over a year. The pain will not go away overnight. It will gradually reduce over a period of time.

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### **Reasons why the pain can last for a long time include:**

- If the foot is not rested enough
- If the wrong type of shoes are worn
- Certain foot types
- If you do not follow the recommended treatment plan that will be provided
- The healing process reduces with age

### **What can be done to make the pain go away?**

There are many treatments that have been claimed to cure plantar fasciitis. These include:

- Rest • Ice • Stretching exercises
- Tablets to help reduce the inflammation
- Modified activity
- Changing footwear • Insole/foot orthoses
- Night splints • Steroid injection to the heel
- Surgery • Therapeutic Ultra Sound
- Taping & Strapping

There is not one treatment that has been found to work for everyone. It is likely that your Podiatrist will first recommend a course of treatment that will include stretching exercises and the application of ice. Many people have found their pain has been relieved by following one of the simple exercises described overleaf and by applying ice. It is important that the instructions are followed carefully so that the maximum benefit can be gained. Investing a little time each day to carry out this treatment, and following the advice of your Podiatrist, can prevent the pain from plantar fasciitis becoming a long term problem.

## **Stretching exercises**

It is not necessary to do all the stretches shown on the next page. A combination works best rather than sticking to one set; performed regularly. The more regular the stretches are done the quicker the result. The stretches need to be done over a period of six to eight weeks to have a beneficial effect. These exercises also provide the basis for any future treatment. If these stretches cause pain in your knees, hips or back consult your Podiatrist, Physiotherapist or GP.

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# Stretch 1

**Stand with feet hips width apart facing a wall or work surface.**



1. Place your hands on the wall/work surface and take a stride back; your feet are still a hips width apart.
2. Ensure your feet are facing forward. Slowly bend your front leg while your back leg is straight and the back heel on the ground.
3. You should feel the stretch in the back of your leg. Go to where it is uncomfortable but not painful.
4. Hold for 30 seconds and repeat 3 times on each leg, this is 1 set. Complete 3 sets per day.

This set of stretches is a moderate stretch of the calf. This is a good stretch to do while the kettle is boiling or while doing the washing up. Working it into your daily routine will not make them a chore.

# Stretch 2

**Stand on the bottom step of the stairs, with the balls of your feet on the step and your heels off.**



1. Hold onto the banister and slowly lower yourself down until you feel the tightness in your calf.
2. Go to where it is uncomfortable but not painful. Hold for 10 seconds and then come back up. Repeat 10 times. This is 1 set, complete 2 sets twice a day.

This set of stretches is more strenuous and most effective, so caution must be taken not to over stretch the calf.

**Do not do this stretch if you have a balance problem.**

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## Stretch 3

Sit with your legs straight on your bed or in a reclining chair.



1. Throw a rolled towel or dressing gown belt over the ball of your foot, holding both ends of the towel, one in each hand.
2. Pull towards you until you feel the stretch in your calf. Hold for 30 seconds and repeat 3 times on each leg. Repeat twice a day.

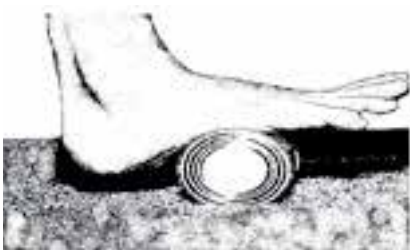
**This set of stretches is a mild stretch of the calf.**

## Applying Ice

Applying ice daily is an effective way of controlling the inflammation and pain associated with plantar fasciitis.

- Place a soft drinks can in the freezer until very cold
- Ensure that it is not left too long or the can may become distorted
- Roll your foot over the can, ideally for 10 minutes
- Reduce this length of time if your foot becomes uncomfortably cold
- This can be repeated, but not within 2 hours of each application

Alternative methods of applying ice are by using a bag of frozen vegetables or ice cubes wrapped in a towel. Calf stretching exercise and ice application are usually included in the initial treatment options for plantar fasciitis. Your Podiatrist will be able to give you further information with regard to following these treatments. If you have any further questions with regard to your heel pain or any aspect of your treatment, please contact your Podiatrist.



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# For further information please contact:

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## **For Weston, Winscombe, Worle & Yatton Clinics**

Telephone: 01275 547 085 or

## **For Clevedon, Nailsea & Portishead Clinics**

Telephone: 01275 342 285



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# Complaints / PALS Information

Whether you want to complain, enquire or simply talk to someone about your concerns, we are here to help and support you.

## **North Somerset Community Partnership Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS) Office can be contacted at:**

Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS)  
North Somerset Community Partnership  
Castlewood POX Box 237  
Tickenham Road  
Clevedon  
North Somerset  
BS21 9AX

**Freephone: 0800 389 5260**

**Email: [nscp.pals@nsomersetcp-cic.nhs.uk](mailto:nscp.pals@nsomersetcp-cic.nhs.uk)**

If you require this leaflet in large print, braille, audio format or in another language please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service. (PALS) Please contact us on the freephone number or email address above. We are pleased to offer a telephone interpreting service. For further details on how to access this service, please contact PALS using the details above.

Patient information leaflets are available for all services provided by North Somerset Community Partnership. Please ask your health care professional. North Somerset Community Partnership is committed to Equality and Diversity for both staff and those who use our services.

