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Department of Podiatry



The Rotherham **NHS**

NHS Foundation Trust

Rotherham Hospital

Moorgate Road
Oakwood
Rotherham
S60 2UD

Telephone 01709 820000
www.therotherhamft.nhs.uk

Plantar fasciitis

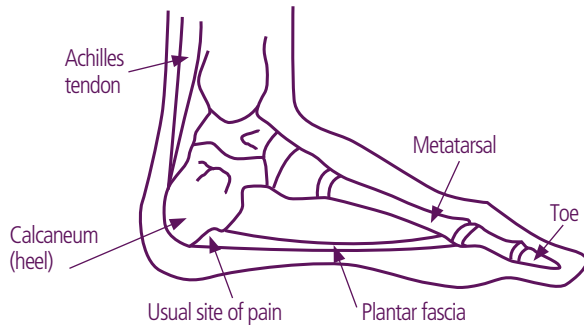


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Plantar fasciitis

What is Plantar Fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis means inflammation of the plantar fascia. The Plantar fascia is a strong fibrous band of tissue (like a ligament) that stretches from the heel bone (calcaneum) and fans out towards the toes. It supports the arch of the foot and also acts as a shock absorber in your foot. Pain comes from microscopic tears within the plantar fascia. Symptoms can resolve with time.



What are the symptoms of plantar fasciitis?

Pain on the underside of the heel is the main symptom. Usually 1 spot is found as the main area of pain and may be tender to touch.

The pain tends to be worse when taking the first few steps after resting and especially when getting out of bed in the morning. It may ease with gentle exercise, but increased activities or being on the feet for a long period of time may worsen the pain towards end of the day. Resting the foot usually eases the pain.

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Sudden stretching of the sole of the foot, for example walking up stairs or on tip-toes may make the pain worse. Some people may limp because of the pain. It is also possible to have plantar fasciitis in both feet at the same time.

How common is plantar fasciitis?

Around 1 in 10 people will get plantar fasciitis at some time in their life. Although it can occur at any age, it is most common in people between the ages 40 to 60 years. It is twice more common in women than men. It is also common in athletes.

What causes plantar fasciitis?

It is caused by repeated tension causing microscopic tears in the tissue. The injury is usually near where the plantar fasciitis attaches to the heel bone. The plantar fasciitis is more likely to injure in certain situations. For example:

- If you are on your feet for a long period of time, or if you do lots of standing, walking and running etc.
- If you are overweight, this will apply added strain on your plantar fascia.
- Poor foot posture, for example very flat feet will add extra strain on the plantar fascia.

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- If you have tight Achilles tendon (the large tendon at the bottom of the calf muscles above the heel). This can reduce your ability to use your ankle effectively and make you more likely to damage the plantar fascia.
- Sudden increase in activity levels or sudden stretching of the sole. If you have changed the surface you are exercising on, for example running on the road instead of a track.
- If you have been wearing shoes with poor arch support or with poor cushioning.

Wrongly, a common belief is that the pain is due to a “spur” or bony growth from the heel bone (calcaneum). Many people have this bony heel spur but not everybody with this gets plantar fasciitis.

Treatments

An assessment will identify the most likely cause of the problem. The treatment programme will vary depending upon the cause. All treatments are aimed at decreasing the stress on the plantar fascia and reducing the inflammation. The fascia tissue heals quite slowly. However, a combination of the following treatments may help to speed recovery. Non-invasive treatments are used first, these include:

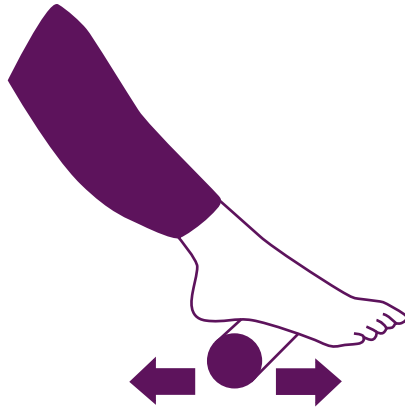
Rest

Use pain as your guide. If your foot is painful, rest it. Avoid running, excess walking or standing.

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Cold treatment

Chill a drinks can in the fridge. Keeping your socks on, roll the cold can under the arch and heel of the foot for 10 minutes. This can be repeated up to 3 times a day. This is a good exercise because not only does it stretch and massage the plantar fascia, but it also provides cold therapy to the inflamed injured area.

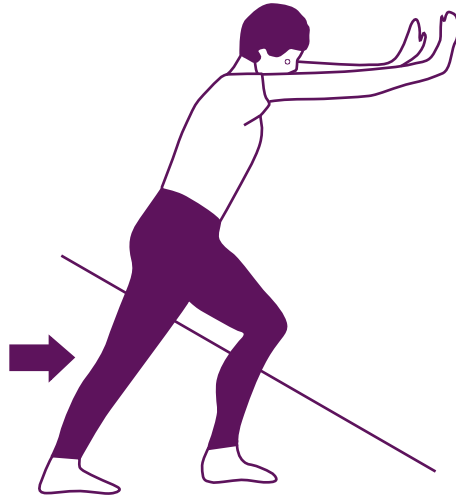


Exercises

Calf stretches

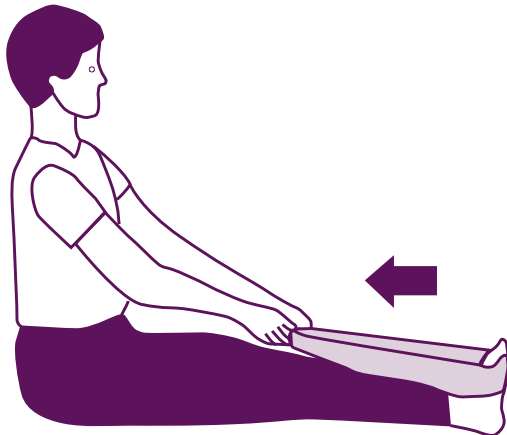
Stand with feet parallel, hip width apart and approximately forearms distance from the wall. Holding the wall, take a step backward. Ensure your back foot is flat to the floor and is facing forward. Bending your front knee take most of your weight on the leading foot. Hold 20 secs. Repeat 3 times, 3 times daily.

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Towel stretch

Sit on the floor or bed with your legs stretched out in front of you. Loop a towel around the injured foot. Slowly pull the towel towards you, keeping your body straight. Hold for 20 seconds then relax - repeat 10 times.



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Strengthening exercises

Towel curls, marble pick-up, and drawing letters of the alphabet with your toes will strengthen the foot.

Towel curls

Place a towel on the floor, with the foot on the towel, pull the towel toward the body by curling up the toes.

Marble pick-up

Place a few marbles on the floor near a cup. Keep the heel on the floor and use the toes to pick up the marbles and drop them into the cup.

Alphabet exercise

Keeping the heel placed in one position on the floor, with your toes draw the range of alphabet letters from A to Z in upper and lower cases.

Footwear

Do not walk barefoot on hard surfaces. Wear shoes or trainers with good support, especially round the heel and under the arch. Shoes should have laces, Velcro or a buckle fastener. A small heel is acceptable. You should avoid wearing thin soled, badly worn and distorted shoes.

Orthoses

Insoles or shoe inserts may be prescribed to you by the podiatrist. These devices will offer your foot support and reduce the strain borne upon the plantar fascia. If you have been provided with insoles, use it as much as possible.

Medication-anti-inflammatory gel

Can be useful in some cases. It is advisable to consult with your GP or pharmacist to see if it is appropriate for you to use them.

Further treatments

Further invasive treatments are only considered when other treatments do not work. These include:

- **Steroid injections** - Aim to reduce inflammation and pain in the tissue.
- **Surgery** - This is rarely required for plantar fasciitis and is only considered when all forms of conservative treatments fail.

Plantar fasciitis

We value your comments

If you have any comments or concerns about the care we have provided, please let us know, or, alternatively, you can write to:

Patient Services

The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust

Rotherham Hospital

Moorgate Road

Oakwood

Rotherham

S60 2UD

Telephone 01709 424461

Email [*complaints@rothgen.nhs.uk*](mailto:complaints@rothgen.nhs.uk)

If you require this document in another language, large print, braille or audio version, please contact Patient Information on 01709 424281.

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How to contact us

Department of Podiatry

Rotherham Community Health Centre

Greasbrough Road

Rotherham

S60 1RY

Telephone 01709 423200

Email podiatryappointments@rothgen.nhs.uk

Useful contact numbers

Podiatry Appointments Office

Telephone 01709 423200

Rotherham Insitute for Obesity (RIO)

Telephone 08444 773622

Re-Shape Rotherham

Telephone 01709 307121

Rotherham Hospital

Health Info

Telephone 01709 427190