

Plantar fasciitis Pain

This leaflet offers more information about plantar fasciopathy. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a clinician.

What is plantar fasciopathy?

The plantar fascia is a strong ligament that runs from the heel to the toes and supports the arch. In some people the attachment of this ligament to the heel bone can become painful. Often there is tenderness beneath the heel which can radiate into the arch of the foot, typically with stiffness and discomfort when rising in the morning or after rest / inactivity.



What are the signs and symptoms?

- Heel pain
- Pain on walking
- Worse in the morning or after a period of rest.

What causes plantar fasciopathy?

Common causes may include:

- Change or increase in activity
- Biomechanical factors – flat feet, high arch feet
- Prolonged use of flat or unsupportive footwear
- Tight calf muscles
- Obesity or recent weight gain.
- Recent injury
- Standing for long periods on hard surfaces
- Sometimes it can be associated with inflammatory conditions.

Do I need any tests to confirm the diagnosis?

There are no specific tests for plantar fasciopathy. A healthcare professional can help confirm the diagnosis by taking a thorough history.

What treatments are available?

Exercise has been shown to be the most effective treatment for this condition. Some useful exercises are shown below. However, alternative treatments you may have heard of include:

Taping

Taping can be an effective temporary treatment for plantar fasciitis and can help indicate if orthotics are suitable.

Cortisone (corticosteroid) injection

Corticosteroid injections are not recommended for plantar fasciopathy. They contain anti-inflammatory medication and as plantar fasciopathy is often not caused by inflammation it is unlikely to help. In addition, corticosteroids have significant side-effects. There is some evidence that they can contribute to ligament rupture in plantar fasciopathy.

Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy

Extracorporeal Shockwave Therapy uses energy pulses to induce the body's natural tissue repair process. There is limited evidence for its use but some people find it beneficial if they have tried everything else. It is important to complement the treatment with exercise.

What happens if I do not get treatment?

Often the symptoms resolve but occasionally the pain may persist for a longer period.

Is there anything I can do to help myself?

Activity modification

The initial treatment should be to reduce the load on the heel. You can do this by pacing your activity levels or reducing your walking mileage. You should also try to avoid bare-foot walking or standing on very hard surfaces. If this is unavoidable then wear trainers or well cushioned shoes - a cushioned heel lift will reduce the impact to the area and can also reduce the tightness of the plantar fascia.

Warm-up

Before getting out of bed and after sitting, draw circles with the foot and then pull the toes towards your shin. You can also massage the heel to get the blood flowing before you stand up.

Cold Therapy

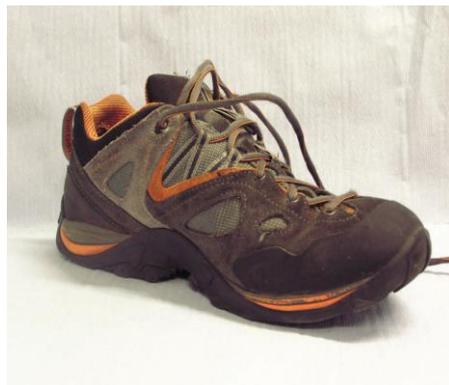
To help with pain and inflammation you can also apply cold therapy to the sore area for 20 minutes up to three or four times a day. A good way of doing this is with a bag of frozen peas in a tea towel. Another approach is to keep a tin (e.g. a baked bean tin) in your fridge to keep it

cold. Place your foot on the can and roll it forwards and backwards. This will help push any fluid away, cool the foot and help massage the area.



Shoes

Appropriate footwear should be supportive and cushioned. This means a substantial sole that is not too flexible or bendy. Trainers are recommended and in particular the mountain or approach style of shoe.



Orthotics

A common cause of plantar fasciitis is when excessive and repetitive forces are applied to the structure. Orthotics are often used to support the foot and relieve or reduce these forces.



Stretching and exercise

Exercise is very important in the treatment of plantar fasciitis and to help to reduce the likelihood of reoccurrence. Try these simple exercises that you can do easily at home. If they don't work a physiotherapist will be able to guide you towards exercises that are best for you.

Try this exercise below to help with your symptoms:

1. Standing with your feet on the bottom step go up onto your tiptoes.
Lower your heels down in a slow controlled manner to below the level of the step until you feel muscle resistance and hold for a count of 15.
Return to your tiptoes slowly and then repeat.
The exercise can be performed in two ways, with and without the knee bent to target different calf muscles.
Start with 10 repetitions, twice a day, aiming for five sets of 15 every other day.



2. If the above is too challenging, you can do a similar movement while sitting with the use of a belt / towel to pull the foot towards your shin. Hold the stretch for 15 seconds and repeat four times, twice a day.



Useful sources of information

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
<https://www.csp.org.uk/conditions/foot-pain>

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about this, please contact the MSK physiotherapy team on 020 8812 4018 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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