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## What is: Plantar Fasciitis

### Definition

Plantar Fasciitis is defined as a painful inflammatory condition caused by excessive wear to the plantar fascia of the foot. The pain is usually felt on the underside of the heel and is often most intense in with the first steps of the day. It can be caused by long periods of weight bearing, obesity, weight gain, jobs that require walking on hard surfaces, shoes with little or no arch support, and/or inactivity. Plantar Fasciitis can also result in a heel spur on the calcaneus, which is the large bone that makes up the heel. The heel spur is an underlying condition, in which case does not produce the pain itself.

### Treatments

Treatments, though slow to respond at times, generally have a good prognosis. The mainstays of treatment are stretching the Achilles tendon and the plantar fascia, rest, ice therapy 3-4 times daily for 15-20 minutes at a time, weight loss, arch support through better shoes or orthotics and taping. Anti-inflammatory drugs such as aspirin or ibuprofen can be used for relief but often offer little benefit in the recovery process.

It should be noted that patients should avoid open back shoes, sandals, and flip-flops during the recovery process and should wear a more supportive and stable shoe. Corticosteroid injections can also give some temporary or permanent relief, but the injections can be painful and costly. Night splints can be used to keep the foot in a dorsiflexed position during sleep to improve calf muscle flexibility and decrease morning pain. Surgical treatments, such as plantar fascia release, are a last resort, and often lead to further complications such as a lowering of the arch and pain in the supero-lateral side of the foot due to compression of the cuboid bone.

### Exercises

A simple exercise you can do for plantar fasciitis is leaning forward against a wall with one knee straight and heel on the ground. Your other knee is bent. Your heel cord and foot arch stretch as you lean. Hold for 10 seconds, relax and straighten up. Repeat 20 times for each sore heel. Another exercise is to lean forward onto a countertop or table, spreading your feet apart with one foot in front of the other. Flex your knees and squat down, keeping your heels on the ground as long as possible. Your heel cords and foot arches will stretch as the heels come up in the stretch. Hold for 10 seconds, relax and straighten up. Repeat 20 times.

#### Sources

[www.orthoinfo.aaos.org](http://www.orthoinfo.aaos.org). 2007. American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.  
[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org). 2007. Wikipedia.