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Plantar fasciitis or “heel spur pain” is the most common cause of pain under the heel. Most patients complain of the pain when they first get out of bed in the morning or when they stand up after being seated. Once they are up and moving around for a while the pain usually improves. The pain is usually located under the center of the heel, but can also extend into the arch.

The average age of patients who develop plantar fasciitis is 45. It is twice as common in women as men. It also occurs more frequently in people who are overweight. Plantar fasciitis is caused by small tears in the ligament along the bottom of the foot called the plantar fascia. Only 50% of patients have an actual bone spur underneath the heel bone, and this is NOT believed to be the cause of the pain.

More than 90-95% of cases of plantar fasciitis improve without surgery or injections, but it may take up to 1 year to improve.

Treatment focuses on:

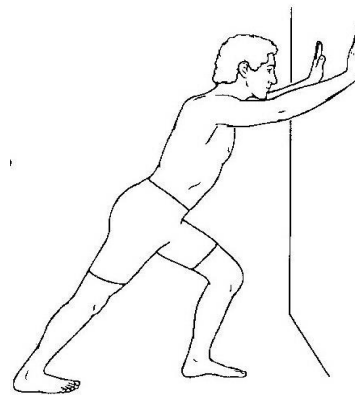
- 1) Stretching exercises for the Achilles tendon and plantar fascia ligament.
- 2) Silicone heel cushions or arch supports inserted into comfortable walking shoes.

Physical therapy may offer some additional modalities that can improve pain not relieved by simple stretching exercises and a home program, including iontophoresis, Graston, or needling techniques. Cortisone injections may work initially, but have no long-term benefit. If used, cortisone injections should be used sparingly since repeated injections can cause a rupture of the plantar fascia or thinning of the heel fat pad. If all the above treatments have failed, shock wave therapy or Tenex may be considered. Surgery is very rarely indicated for this condition.

Exercise 1: With one hand, grasp toes and pull ankle and toes up towards shin to stretch plantar fascia. With the other hand, firmly massage the plantar fascia ligament in the arch. Massage for a few minutes at least three times a day.



Exercise 2: Stand against the wall with the painful foot back, leg straight, and forward leg bent. Keeping your heel on floor, lean into the wall until stretch is felt in the calf and hold for 20 seconds. Do not bounce. Do five stretches per set, three times a day. Remember, lean in with your hips, not your head, and keep your toes pointed forwards.



Exercise 3: Roll the arch of your foot back and forth over a frozen tennis ball or can of orange juice to stretch the plantar fascia ligament.

