



## Plantar Fasciitis – What is it and how to treat it

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So, has all that outdoor summer activity started to take a toll on your feet? Are you starting to experience some sharp pains in the heel of your foot? Well, in this case it might be time to consider addressing some of those concerns before your symptoms worsen.

Plantar fasciitis is a condition in which the band of tissue (plantar fascia) that runs from your heel to your toes on the bottom side of your foot becomes inflamed. This is a common condition that affects roughly 10% of the population and is typically seen in runners, individuals who spend prolonged periods of time on their feet, and those who are obese. All of these factors can directly affect the positioning of your foot in standing (weight bearing) versus sitting (non-weight bearing) positions.

Other symptoms indicating you are experiencing this condition include significant pain in the morning when first getting out of bed and walking. This occurs because the fascial tissue has tightened in the evening when you were not weight bearing and then the excessive stretch upon standing causes increased discomfort. Here are some things I have found the most helpful if you are suffering from these symptoms.

### Stretch:

I really like two stretches in this instance, one for the plantar fascia and one for the Achilles/calf.

1. Achilles/Calf stretch: Hang your heels off the edge of a step. You should feel a comfortable stretch through the calf area. Hold the stretch 20 seconds and repeat 5 times. Do this 5 times per day.
2. Plantar fascia stretch: Standing facing a wall push your toes into the wall and let them extend backwards. Continue to press the toes into the wall until the stretch is felt through the bottom of the foot. Hold stretch 20 seconds and repeat 5 times. Do this 5 times per day.

### Strengthen:

Stressing the tissue will help promote a healing response.

1. Toe scrunches: Place a towel on a slick floor or on cookie sheet on the floor. Try to scrunch up the towel using your toes. Perform 10 minutes once per day.

### Massage:

This is another way to directly stress the tissue and will help promote tissue healing.

1. Golf ball roll: Roll a golf ball under the arch of your foot for 10 minutes twice per day.
2. Ice bottle: An alternative to the golf ball roll is to freeze a long, 10 oz. bottled water and roll that under your arch. This will provide you with the massage and some inflammation control at the same time.

Finally, I encourage icing for 10 minutes at the end of each day. This will help slow the inflammation process. You should also reduce stressful activities, which include running and jumping for 4-6 weeks.

If these few tips don't help alleviate your symptoms over that period, you may be suffering from a more severe case or there are other factors contributing to your condition. In those instances it is best to follow-up with a physician and/or physical therapist who can perform a thorough assessment and provide more thorough recommendations based on your presentation.

