

# Plantar Fasciitis

## (Plantar Heel Pain)

Physiotherapy



This leaflet provides information, answers and self-help strategies regarding your plantar fasciitis.

### What is Plantar Fasciitis?

The Plantar fascia is a **thick ligament-like structure** that supports the bottom of your foot. This can become **irritated** for several reasons and lead to **plantar fasciitis**. This is a condition which causes **pain under your heel** and possibly the sole of the foot. It can affect **one or both feet** at the same or varying times. The condition is **common**, affecting between **4-7% of the population** at some point in their lifetime. It can be **slow to improve**, but over **70% of people** experience **improvement** with conservative treatment alone.

### What are the symptoms?

Common complaints of plantar fasciitis are pain on the **underside of your heel or arch** on the **first few steps in the morning** or when **standing after a period of sitting**, which gradually eases after a short period of walking. **Prolonged walking** may also cause your heel pain to worsen.

### What are the causes?

- An **increase in activities** such as walking, running or standing.
- Being **overweight** or a recent increase in bodyweight.
- Prolonged **standing** and time spent **on feet**.
- **Ankle tightness**, especially upward movement (dorsiflexion).

### What are the treatment options?

You can **treat plantar fasciitis yourself** with some **simple exercises** and **self-management techniques**, to **reduce the load** going through the heel. You may notice that it **takes a few weeks** to notice any **improvements in your heel pain**, but this is normal. The most important thing is to be **patient** and remain consistent with the **self-help** in this leaflet.



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## What can I do?

### Reducing Pain

There are many ways this can be achieved

(complete as package for 6-8 weeks for best results)

- 1 Relative rest** – Reduce your overall time spent standing and walking, eg take breaks during walks or sit down regularly when standing. This can be difficult to do within your busy life but can really help to reduce your heel pain.
- 2 Footwear** – It is important to wear shoes that are comfortable and supportive for you. Flat shoes such as pump style trainers, flip flops or sandals may not provide the best support.
- 3 Insoles** – Over-the-counter insoles can help support the sole of your foot and take some pressure off your plantar fascia. Gradually build up time wearing insoles and aim to wear as often as possible within comfortable shoes/trainers. They need to be worn in a lace up or closed shoe.
- 4 Taping** – This can be used to help support the arch of your foot. Taping is to only be used when standing or walking and is not needed when resting or sleeping. Only use if you do not have allergies to the tape. If you do not notice any improvement in your pain when the tape is applied, you do not need to continue using.
- 5 Painkillers** – Simple pain relief or anti-inflammatory medication can help with the symptoms in the early stages. Always check with you GP or pharmacist before taking any new medication.

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## What can I do?

### Exercises

It is OK to feel some discomfort whilst completing the following exercises, which is entirely normal to begin with, providing the pain is not significantly worse the following day. We recommend to only exercise up to around 4-5/10 if zero is no pain and 10/10 is severe pain.

## 1 Calf Stretch – Knee Straight and Bent



Stand with your legs in a staggered stance and both hands supported, with your target leg behind you. Aim to keep your foot facing forwards, and heel flat on the floor.



For a slightly different stretch, slowly bend the back knee while keeping the heel on the floor.

Hold the position for 15-30 seconds.

You can make this harder by taking your back leg further away from the wall to increase the stretch. Complete regularly throughout the day.

## 2 Plantar Fascia Stretch – Sitting and Standing



Sitting down with your affected foot crossed over the knee of your unaffected leg. Pull your toes and ankle up with your hand to stretch the bottom of your foot and toes. If this causes any pain that is too much, reduce how far you are stretching your foot.



To complete this a different way: Stand in front of a wall. Extend your toes against the wall and try to bring your knee towards the wall until you feel a gentle stretch under the foot.

Hold the position for 15-30 seconds.

Complete regularly throughout the day.

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## 3 Foot Strengthening – Double and Single Leg



Standing with balance support, put your toes on a rolled towel.

Raise up onto your tiptoes on both feet, keeping the weight even across the inside and outside of your feet.

Hold the position for 2 seconds and slowly lower down.



To make this harder you can complete on one leg only.



Aim to repeat between 5-10 times. Complete regularly throughout the day.

**NOTE:** This exercise can be difficult, and sometimes lead to an increase in pain. If this occurs, stop this exercise and come back to it at a later date when you feel your pain is more controlled.

## Taping

**Low-Dye taping** is designed to **off-load** the plantar fascia.  
Use a **2.5cm zinc oxide** (rigid strapping) tape – easily found online.



The first taping is applied around the heel, and the outer and inner border of the foot. Repeat this tape twice. Apply enough tension to avoid the tape from wrinkling-but no tighter.

The second taping is applied across the underside of the foot. Starting at ankle height, apply the tape across the foot from the outside to the inside, with mild tension.

Overlap each strap slightly and keep going right until reaching the ball of the foot.

Apply a securing band over this second taping.

Initially, the tape will feel slightly tight, but this should ease off after some time. **Only wear this tape when on your feet** (standing or walking). Do not wear at night or when inactive.

If you do not feel the tape is helpful for your pain or results in irritation, causes itching or pins/needles, it should be removed.

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## Further information



Visit our [webpage](#) on plantar fasciitis if you wish to access further information about this condition, and videos of the exercises shown.



Use our [Decision Making Tool](#) for further care options, to learn more about what other ways there are to treat this condition and identify what works best for you.



If you feel symptoms have **not improved within 6-8 weeks** of this supported self-management and you wish to see a physiotherapist, please complete our [online self-referral](#) or be referred by a healthcare professional.

If you have any **questions** please contact the **Care Co-ordination Centre** on:



**0300 131 0111**



**provide.askus@nhs.net**

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