

Understanding Plantar Fasciitis

What is Plantar Fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis is an injury of the plantar fascia caused by too much strain. The plantar fascia is a flat band of tissue that runs through the bottom of your foot. It connects your toes to your heel bone. Tiny tears may occur in the middle of the band or near the heel bone.



What are the typical symptoms?

People with plantar fasciitis usually report an 'on and off', burning pulling pain that develops slowly over a period of weeks and months.

It is usually most painful in the morning when they first put their foot on the floor. After a period of massaging and walking, the pain will decrease but becomes more painful again by the end of the day.

Walking and running will make the condition worse and there will usually be an increased pain the following day. The pain may be around the heel or along the middle part of the foot. The pain usually occurs only on one foot at first but may develop on both sides over time.

How is it caused?

There are many reasons why the plantar fascia is overstrained. These include:

- Recent gain in weight
- Obesity
- Increase in certain exercises
- Standing and walking too much because of work e.g. teachers

- Shoes that do not fit well
- Biomechanical dysfunction e.g. overpronation, flat foot and high arches
- Tight calf muscles
- Natural process of ageing
- Sudden and serious injury

How is it treated?

The aim in treating plantar fasciitis is to reduce the strain in the plantar fascia band. This can be done by:

- Limiting weight bearing activities and applying ice on your heel to reduce the pain
- Doing stretching exercises
- Using strapping and paddings
- Wearing supportive shoes (advice on footwear will be given by your podiatrist)
- Wearing supportive orthoses (to correct biomechanical dysfunction such as flat feet)
- Taking medication - NSAIDs (Non Steroid Anti-inflammatory Drugs) may be given to take away the pain temporarily
- Giving steroid injections if needed

The sooner this condition is picked up, the better the result of the treatment will be. Therefore, it is good to check with a podiatrist when you have any heel pain that has been bothering you for two or more weeks on both sides of your feet.