

# Exercises for Plantar Fasciitis

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One of the simplest, yet most debilitating conditions that plagues athletes and couch potatoes alike is plantar fasciitis, or PF. Plantar fasciitis is an inflammation of the plantar fascia---a thick, fibrous set of bands that run down the length of the bottom of your foot and connect your toes to your heel bone.

While PF is well understood, it is very hard to treat. There are however, a number of effective [exercises](#) that work through two approaches: stretching and strengthening.

## Stretching the Plantar Fascia

Stretching the plantar fascia is effective for rehabilitating PF. By lengthening the fascia, there is less chance of it becoming inflamed through normal daily activities and routine [exercise](#). The rotational hamstring stretch is a good place to start.

Stand behind a table. With your left foot on the ground, place your right foot on top of a table with your foot at waist level. Turn your left foot outward about 45 degrees while standing on your left leg. Lean forward until you feel the stretch in your right hamstring (the muscle that runs down the back of the upper leg). Turn your right knee outward, then in and repeat for 20 repetitions. Lower your right leg to the ground, lift your left foot onto the table and repeat the exercise on the left side.

Another exercise is called the tri-plane Achilles heel stretch. Begin by standing with your feet apart, directly under your hips. Advance the left foot approximately 6 to 10 inches ahead of the right foot. While shifting most of your weight onto your left foot, press the left knee forward until only the toes of your right foot are in contact with the ground. Point your left knee toward the left and to the side. You should be able to feel the stretch in the left Achilles heel. Return to the original position with your left foot ahead of the right. Point your left knee toward the right and to the side. Repeat in each direction, 20 times.

## Strengthening the Plantar Fascia

Once the initial inflammation has subsided, it's important to begin strengthening the PF to help prevent being stricken again. A popular PF strengthening exercise is the toe walking exercise. In your bare feet, stand as tall as you can on your tip toes. Walk forward, taking one 12-inch step every two seconds. Try to walk as tall as you possibly can while balancing on the balls of your feet and your toes. Start slowly and build up to three sets of 60 feet, each.

Toe grasping is another exercise that can help. Spread a hand towel out in front of your feet. Walk up to the end of the towel with your bare feet. While resting on your heels, scrunch the towel toward you by extending your toes, placing them on the towel and curling the towel toward you. Continue until the entire towel is underneath your feet. Repeat two more sets.

## Other Exercises You Can Do During the Day

You can also work on stretching and strengthening your PF throughout the day---even without taking off your shoes. When walking from the [car](#) to the office, roll from your left heel up high onto your toes. Land on the right heel and repeat the exercise by rolling onto your right toes.

Another simple exercise you can do wherever there are stairs is the calf stretch. Climb onto the second or third stair step balancing your weight on the balls of your feet. Your heels should be hanging free over the edge of the stairs. While supporting your upper body against the walls with your hands, slowly lower your heels and hold. Gently raise your heels until they are higher than your toes, and hold the position for several seconds. Repeat five to 10 times. See how low you can lower heels and how high you can extend on your

