

Ways to Relieve Plantar Fasciitis

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Plantar fasciitis is a simple injury but can have debilitating effects for those who enjoy being active. It is frequently caused by overuse, especially when dramatically increasing your workouts or changing your routine. Other times it can develop over time. Regardless how you succumb to plantar fasciitis, rehabilitation can take months.

About Plantar Fasciitis

The plantar fascia is a long, broad band of connective tissue that runs along the bottom of the foot from the heel to the ball of the foot. Because it has to support and absorb all of your weight during high impact [exercise](#), it can be injured by pronating feet, weight gain, improperly fitted shoes, abrupt changes in exercise routine or almost anything that causes stress to the bottom of your feet.

The pain can be slight at first but will often escalate to severe pain---usually underneath the heel. It is typically worse when you first get out of bed and can subside slightly throughout the day but never entirely goes away.

Exercises to Relieve Pain

Depending on how much you're affected, there are several ways to relieve plantar fasciitis pain. [Exercises](#) that stretch and strengthen the plantar fascia can be very effective.

A simple heel stretch, performed standing on the second step of a flight of stairs, can provide a lot of relief. Support all of your weight on the balls of your feet and use your hands and arms to brace your upper body against a wall. Slowly allow your heels to relax down toward the floor. You should feel the stretch along the bottom of your feet to the heel. Hold the stretch for several seconds and return to the starting position. Repeat the stretch three to five times. After several weeks (when and if the pain begins to subside) add heel extensions to the stretch. After returning to the starting position, extend your feet, raising your heels. Hold for several seconds.

Another simple exercise involves a bath towel. Sit on the floor with your right leg extended in front of you. Hold a bath towel by the ends and loop the center over the ball of your foot. While keeping your knee straight, gently pull back on the ends of the towel. Hold the stretch for 10 to 15 seconds. Repeat on each foot three to five times.

A fun way to stretch and strengthen the plantar fascia is to pick up marbles with your toes. Place a Styrofoam cup in front of your bare foot. Place several marbles between your foot and the cup. Use your toes to pick up and release the marbles into the cup. Repeat until you've transferred five to ten marbles into the cup with each foot.

Other Solutions

In addition to stretching and strengthening exercises, you can alleviate some of the pain by taking anti-inflammatory drugs, icing, getting orthotics or changing your exercise routine.

Taking over-the-counter medications like ibuprofen will help to reduce inflammation caused by the micro-tears in the plantar fascia. Icing is another great way to reduce inflammation. Fill several small Styrofoam cups with water and place them in the freezer. After they've frozen, peel back the side of the cup and apply to the affected areas in a circular motion for five to ten minutes. Custom orthotics can help correct situations that caused the initial inflammation. Plantar fasciitis is often caused by flat or structurally deficient feet. Orthotics are made to compensate for these deficiencies and properly support your weight.

While you're recovering, it's important to suspend weight-bearing activities that put stress on your plantar fascia. Consider switching from running to bicycling or swimming. After the pain begins to subside, you should be able to return to the activities you enjoy, provided you've taken steps to correct the situations that originally caused the injury.