

Plantar Fasciitis (Heel Pain)

Definition

Plantar fasciitis is probably the most common cause of heel pain. It is inflammation of the origin of the plantar fascia. The plantar fascia is the tissue under the foot which forms the arch. Over – stretching of the fascia leads to excess traction and inflammation. The development of scar tissue makes the fascia less flexible and causes further traction from other parts of the foot.

Symptoms

Symptoms come on gradually and are often worse in the morning. People will present with a dull to sharp pain occurring about the plantar calcaneal (heel) area, especially after rest and then continue during initial periods of weight bearing (standing). The pain normally subsides within a few minutes, but may re-occur once the sequence is re-established. The pain is often described as a ‘stone bruise.’ The pain is often worse in the morning as the plantar fascia is more inflexible at those times.





Biomechanical Cause

Subtalar joint pronation lengthens the arch structure, elongating the foot and places a traction force on the plantar fascia. Over time these tractional forces result in inflammation of the fascia and surrounding tissue.

Often the chronic traction of the plantar fascia from the calcaneal tuberosity, (heel) may lead to the development of a bony growth on the calcaneal tuberosity – referred to as a ‘heel spur’ – causing a sharp pain right in the centre of the heel.

Often tight calf muscles will add to plantar fascial pain. Because of the tightness in the calf, the foot cannot dorsiflex at the level of the ankle during the ‘take off’ phase in walking. Combined with the excess pronation, this results in the foot dorsiflexing at the mid tarsal joint. In turn, this places extra strain on the plantar fascia.

In summary, the causes can be poor foot posture (pronation), arthritic heel spur, muscle and tissue imbalance, fracture of the heel or other trauma, nerve entrapment or tendon problems.

Treatment

- ❖ Rest
- ❖ Ice Therapy
- ❖ Reducing Pain & Inflammation
- ❖ Stretching Exercises
- ❖ Orthotics & Footwear assessment
- ❖ Effective Taping
- ❖ Lifestyle changes, weight loss



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