

## PATIENT INFORMATION

### Management of your heel pain (Plantar Fasciitis) Important Things You Need To Know

Your heel pain is commonly called plantar fasciitis which is a condition that most of the time affects the heel, but occasionally it will affect the arch of the foot, or at times both the heel and the arch. Plantar fasciitis improves on its own without the need for surgery, with management by you being the most effective treatment.

Plantar fasciitis is a toothache like pain in the base of your heel. You may experience pain that is worse first thing in the morning, or after rest (commonly called start up pain). Your pain may then also get worse with increased activity as the day progresses.

The plantar fascia is a strong ligament-like structure that runs from its attachment on the bottom of the heel out to the ball of the foot. Because of its strength and location, the plantar fascia helps to support the arch of the foot. Because of its structure, the plantar fascia is not very elastic, and is fairly unyielding.

Plantar fasciitis is not usually caused by an injury, but instead is caused by gradually progressive overload within your foot which eventually results in a strain-like injury of the plantar fascia. The swelling that results is made worse by continued unprotected activity.

The cause of the chronic overload is usually a combination of factors that can put excess stress on the supporting structures of the arch of the foot. These factors can include:

- being overweight
- having a tight calf muscle
- spending a prolonged time standing or walking on the feet
- footwear with inadequate arch support
- sports overload.

The treatment of your heel pain will involve multiple treatments at the same time until the pain has been resolved at least 3 months. Using multiple treatments at the same time works more effectively than trying one thing, then trying another. The pain will take time to improve – it can take 3-12 months, even up to 2 years to completely resolve, so persevere with the range of treatments.

#### What can I do for myself?

You should use as many of these treatments as possible concurrently:

- Wear supportive shoes.
- Avoid standing or walking barefoot or in unsupportive footwear like slippers or sandals.
- Lose weight
- Modify your activities. (Decrease the time that you stand, walk, or engage in exercise that put a load your feet. Convert impact exercise to non-impact exercise – cycling, swimming, and pool running are acceptable alternatives.)
- Use ice on the painful area for 15-20 minutes, at least 2-3 times per day - especially in the evening.
  - Option A - Fill a styrofoam or paper cup with water and freeze it. Peel back the leading edge of the cup before application. Massage the affected area for 15-20 minutes.
  - Option B – Fill a small 2-3 inch diameter plastic bottle with water and freeze it. Roll your heel/arch back and forth over the bottle for 15- 20 minutes.

- Option C – Rest the affected area on an ice pack for 15-20 minutes. **CAUTION: Avoid using ice with circulation or sensation problems.**
- Stretching your calves **\*\*this is most important and should be done for at least 6 weeks\*\***
  - Do your calf stretching exercises for 30 seconds on each leg twice, at least two times per day.
    - Stand an arm's length away from the wall, facing the wall. Lean into the wall, stepping forward with one leg, leaving the other leg planted back. The leg remaining back is the one being stretched.
    - The leg being stretched should have the knee straight (locked) and the toes pointed straight at the wall.
    - Stretch forward until tightness is felt in the calf.
    - Hold this position without bouncing for a count of 30 seconds.
    - Repeat the stretch for the opposite leg.
- Use an oral anti-inflammatory medication
  - Take these medicines as prescribed by your GP or purchase these from a pharmacy.
- Use a good arch support in your shoe. This can be an off the shelf arch support from your chemist
- Use a night splint each night while you sleep. This brace keeps your plantar fascia stretched while you sleep by holding your foot at 90 degrees to your leg. ([http://www.sealsure.co.nz/how\\_to\\_order\\_night\\_splints.htm](http://www.sealsure.co.nz/how_to_order_night_splints.htm))
- Tape your feet. There are good instructional videos online (Google plantar fasciitis taping technique <http://rocktapenz.mybigcommerce.com/consumer-tape>)
- See your doctor when your pain has failed to respond to the above regimen after three months of application

