

Heel Pain and Plantar Fasciitis

Definition:

The Plantar Fascia is the thick band of inflexible material that runs from the heel to the ball of the foot. It helps to maintain the arch of the foot. When this band is over stretched it can tear – causing inflammation. This is called Plantar Fasciitis.

A heel spur or heel pain is when this band of tissue pulls away from its insertion into the heel. This can cause bleeding, calcification and a spur to form.

Symptoms:

- Pain at the base of the heel (like standing on a stone)
- Pain at its worst when first getting out of bed
- Pain, burning, tightness in the arch of the foot

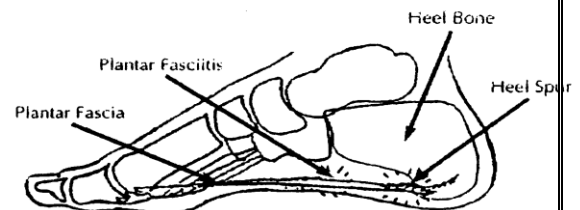
Causes:

- Flat feet
- High arched feet
- Tight Achilles Tendon
- Worn out shoes or shoes that are too rigid
- Running on soft surfaces
- Sprinting (toe running) hill running

Treatment:

- Modify Footwear (as advised by your podiatrist)
- Ice area for 10 minutes several times a day. Especially after activity.
- Reduce activity, change footwear (your podiatrist can assess your current shoes for problems).
- Take aspirin.
- Massage area by running foot over a golf ball. Exert enough pressure so that slight tenderness is felt.

This helps to stretch the plantar fascia.



- Muscle strengthening and stretching. Your podiatrist can teach you exercises that will be beneficial.
- Heel pads may be used to try and relieve the plantar fascia of stress and improve shock absorbency to the heel.
- Strapping may help support the arch and is often implemented by your podiatrist to give an indication of the effect of long term, permanent support.
- Orthotic therapy. If conservative measures fail, your podiatrist may need to manufacture orthoses (custom made shoe inserts that correct the foot problem which has caused the Plantar Fasciitis).