



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Plantar fasciitis

Issued by the walk-in services and minor injury units



This leaflet is to give you information about plantar fasciitis.

What is plantar fasciitis?

The plantar fascia is a strong band of tissue which stretches from the heel towards the bottom of the toes.

If it becomes inflamed or injured it causes pain and stiffness. This will usually be at the point where it attaches to the heel. It can often feel tender if you press deeply in the heel area.

Plantar fasciitis may occur if you are on your feet a lot. Also if you have done a lot of walking, standing or running without being used to it.

Risks

You may feel pain when you first get up, this may ease a little after a few steps. You may also feel increased pain under the heel, this sometimes radiates along the sole of the foot. Long walks often make the pain worse, however, total rest (avoiding all walking) will not help.

Alternative/options for treatment

The condition usually eases itself in time; however the tissue is slow to heal and this may take several months.

Painkillers

Medication such as pain killers and anti-inflammatory drugs may help. Ask a pharmacist for advice on which medication may be suitable for you.

Ice packs

Ice packs help to reduce inflammation during the early stages following an injury. It cools the area down and reduces swelling.

- Use a bag of frozen peas or crushed ice cubes placed in a plastic bag.
- Protect your skin from ice burns with a damp flannel or cloth. Place your cold pack on top of the painful area and wrap the towel around to hold it in place. Never apply ice directly to your skin as this may result in an ice burn.
- Ice packs can be applied two to three times a day for 20 minutes, leaving two hours between applications.

By following this advice your symptoms should improve. If they do not improve you should seek advice from your GP.

Wear comfortable supportive footwear, preferably cushioned (such as trainers). Avoid walking barefoot in the house. Try limiting the amount of time you spend on your feet by having frequent rests and doing 'little but often'. Remember, total rest (avoiding all walking) will not help.

Tight calf muscles are common with plantar fasciitis. Regular stretching exercises can help – these should be done within comfortable limits. Pull foot towards you and feel the tension at the back of the calf.

Advice

Weak muscles under the arch of the foot ('fallen arches') may also aggravate plantar fasciitis. Try to pick up small objects using your toes, and try to crumple a cloth placed under the arch of the foot. Lose weight if necessary. Even a few pounds can make quite a difference to the load placed on the feet. Cushioned insoles or heel pads are often beneficial. You can buy insoles or gel heel pads from most pharmacies. You may be referred to a podiatrist or chiropodist for an assessment.

Diabetics

If you are diabetic, the information provided in this leaflet is not suitable for you.

- Seek advice from your GP or a podiatrist as your heel pain could be related to your diabetes.
- If you are diabetic do not use cold or ice packs on your feet as this may affect your circulation.
- Do not use insoles or heel pads without seeking professional advice – inappropriate insoles may rub the skin and cause a wound or break in the skin.

Contact

Should you have any questions or queries please ring 0844 811 8111 and ask for one of the following:

A&E Reception, Wansbeck General Hospital
(Open from 8am to 10pm)

A&E Reception, North Tyneside General Hospital
(Open from 8am to Midnight)

A&E Reception, Hexham Children's Unit, Wansbeck
(Open from 8am to 10pm)

Alnwick Minor Injury Unit (Open 24hours)

Berwick Minor Injury Unit (Open 24 hours)

Blyth Minor Injury Unit (Open from 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

You can call NHS 111 for urgent medical advice 24/7.

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

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General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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