



Three Keys to Prevent and Treat Planter Fasciitis

Plantar fasciitis is inflammation of the long band of tissue that runs on the underside of the foot from heel to the base of the big toe. The condition is commonly caused by standing for long periods in unsupportive footwear, such as flip-flops. Pain occurs on the underside of the heel and arch of your foot, making walking and standing difficult.

The following tips can be helpful in avoiding this painful, debilitating condition.

The first key to prevention and treatment of plantar fasciitis is attention to proper footwear. Unsupportive footwear, such as flip-flops, crocs, and flats, increase the strain and tension on the plantar fascia. Shoes with good arch support and a softer heel are better choices. Brands of shoes we generally recommend include Brooks, Saucony, and Asics. If you cannot wear sneakers at work, contact your shoe or boot provider for supportive footwear recommendations. In addition to choosing supportive footwear, frequently rotating footwear is an excellent plan.

Over the counter orthotics are also a good option, supported by research, for preventing and potentially eliminating plantar fasciitis symptoms.

Brands such as Spenco, Curex, and Superfeet manufacture high quality inserts. Customized inserts can be created, if necessary.



The second key to prevention and treatment of plantar fasciitis is maintaining proper ankle and foot mobility. Limited dorsiflexion (toe toward your knee motion) and big toe extension (upward) increase stress through the plantar fascia, increasing strain during walking. An exercise that will increase motion through the ankle joint is to stand with the toes on the edge of a stair, slowly lowering the heel until a stretch is felt in the bottom of the foot and back of the lower leg. Hold 30 seconds. Repeat twice, three times daily. For a targeted approach to the big toe, cross one leg over the other and pull the big toe back toward the top of your foot, hold 10 seconds, then relax.

The third key to prevention and treatment of plantar fasciitis is avoiding drastic activity changes, such as suddenly running/walking 2 miles when you are not accustomed to this level of activity. For any body part, significant changes in day-to-day activities increase your risk of developing health conditions, particularly if you are accustomed to a sedentary lifestyle.

In cases where significantly increased activity is anticipated, such as an upcoming family vacation to Disney world, slowly working into a walking program, prior to the trip, will allow your body to adapt to the increased activity, lessening the likelihood of a condition like plantar fasciitis.

If these strategies prove ineffective, it's time to see a healthcare provider. A physical therapist can treat inflamed tissue with modalities, manual techniques, and therapeutic taping. Physical therapy can build up the muscle tissue surrounding the plantar fascia, as well as the fascia itself, so it is able to tolerate activity and prevent condition re-occurrence. A podiatrist is also a good option. They can suggest or create the correct orthotic for you, offer injections, or provide a night brace that keeps the plantar fascia stretched during the night, reducing further trauma to the plantar fascia with those first few steps in the morning that are commonly so very painful.

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