

Plantar Heel Pain/Plantar Fasciitis

Your Doctor or Physiotherapist may have diagnosed you with 'Plantar Fasciitis' or 'Plantar Heel Pain'. They both describe pain coming from the soft tissues underneath your foot. Pain on the sole of your foot is common. Fortunately, it can be managed effectively following some simple advice and performing exercises regularly over a course of a few months. The following information is designed to help you self-manage your pain and eventually return to all your normal daily activities.

What can I do to help?

If you are struggling with your pain, the following initial advice should help you to get started:

Pain relief: Basic painkillers (like Paracetamol) or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory gels (such as Ibuleve or Voltarol) are cheap and easily available over the counter without the need for prescription. These can be very effective as they lessen your discomfort and importantly allow you to keep active. However, please check the labels for instructions/safe usage and any possible reasons why you should not use them. If you are currently taking any form of medication it is advisable to consult your GP or pharmacist before taking additional pain relief.

Ice: You may find it therapeutic to use ice to reduce your pain/irritation. A packet of frozen peas wrapped in a tea-towel works well. Leave in place for up to 15 minutes at a time. Again, this can be repeated several times a day if found helpful. Similarly, you can put on bottle filled with water in the freezer and use that to roll up and down the sole of your foot for a similar length of time.

Rest vs. activity: It is usually best to carry out your normal activities, but try not to overdo it. Let pain be your guide; short-lasting/temporary discomfort is fine but worsening or constant 24/7 pain indicates you are likely doing too much and need to take things a little easier. You need to pace yourself to start with and try to do a bit more each few days. You will find keeping moving gently more comfortable than complete rest. It is also common to be quite stiff or sore after prolonged periods of rest, ie. sitting for a while or first thing in the morning. This is quite typical and will eventually lessen as you improve.

Supportive shoes and insoles: It is best to wear supportive shoes. If your pain is more under your heel then maybe a silicon insert/insole will help reduce the weight impact when standing/walking. If your pain is more in the arch of your foot then look for insoles that give your arches comfortable support.

Exercise

Exercise can be an extremely beneficial treatment for your foot pain as it can gradually build the tolerance and load-capacity of your tissues and help ease stiffness and soreness. Feet can respond really well to gradual loading programme over a course of a few months.

Please try this exercise programme 2-3 times a day. A small increase in your discomfort is OK if it goes away within 20-30 minutes and not worse the next day. If your pain doesn't settle within this timeframe then let it settle with rest then perform the exercises gentler the next time and then gradually build up as able. It may take 5-6 weeks before you start to see improvement. Eventually you can start to make the exercises harder as you progress.

Exercise 1- Seated Heel Raises

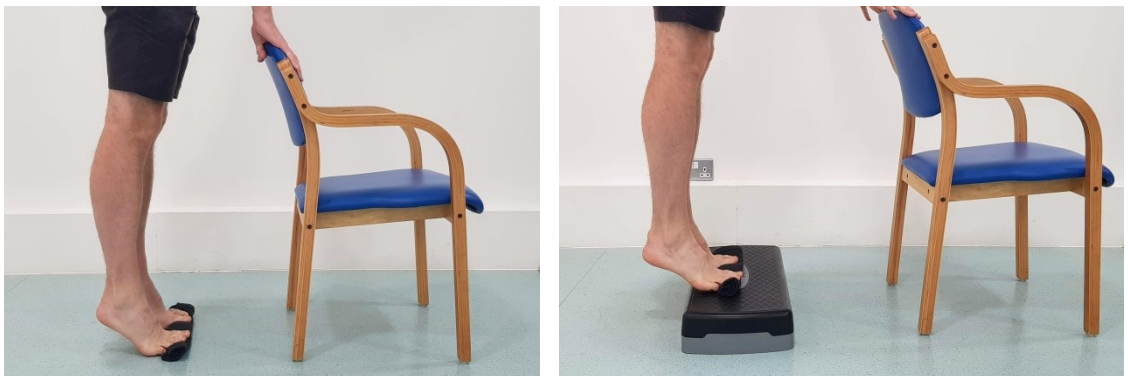
Sit with a tee-shirt rolled up underneath your toes. Lift up onto your toes and slowly back down again maintaining body weight through your elbows

Repeat 10-20 times – aiming for slight ache/discomfort that has resolved with 30minutes

As soon as you find easy – lean forwards putting weight through your elbows to add some resistance.



Once you can perform 20 repetitions easily, progress to standing and eventually off a step as shown. Progressing the loading is really important a building up the strength and load tolerance of the soft tissues around your foot and ankle that are causing you discomfort. You need to continue this for a course of 3-6 months, gradually increasing the difficult as you are able to achieve further gains.



Exercise 2 – Arch Raises

Arch raises; try and accentuate the arches of your feet without scrunching the toes.

Hold for few sec - Repeat 10-20 times



Exercise 3 - Toe Crunching

Whilst sitting place a tea towel under your toes and practice scrunching the tea towel up with them.

10-20 repetitions



Exercise 4 – Calf Stretches

Step stance holding the back of a chair – keep the back heel firmly on the floor and lean forwards to achieve a stretch down the back of the calf. There are two calf stretches to perform:

- i) with back leg straight
- ii) with back leg bent

Hold each for 30 seconds

You may find this particular stretch helpful first thing in the morning when it can often be the most uncomfortable time of the day.



You can also try a stretch using a towel or a piece of elastic or tubigrip placed around the ball of your foot. Sit with your knee extended and pull the towel towards you. Hold for 30 seconds.



Exercise 5 – Self massage

If your pain is mainly in the arch of your foot then you can perform firm massage using a massage or tennis/lacrosse ball. You could also try a rolling pin or a bottle of water placed in the freezer.

Perform for 3-5 mins (as and when you find helpful)

