



Plantar Heel Pain

Plantar Fasciitis

Common Lower Limb Functional Disorders

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SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

This condition is characterised as pain that is at its worst usually first thing in the morning. The pain is centralised on the bottom of the heel and typically settles itself down by mid-morning only to recur as a dull ache by the end of the evening. In worsening situations, or when left untreated, this cycle of pain usually increases in its intensity and eventually remains continuous throughout the day.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

In anatomical and medical terms, there is a fibrous tissue that everyone has deep within the arch of their foot called the *plantar aponeurosis*. This is also known as the *plantar fascia* and it is attached to the bottom of the heel bone. This structure is made up of one large central band flanked either side with two thinner outer bands. They extend along the arch toward the toes where their fibres fan out and attach onto the bases of the toes.

When functioning normally your plantar fascia will assist in the natural support of your long-arch of the foot. However, when this arch of your foot is in excessive collapse, then your plantar fascia comes under tremendous strain and can become injured by tearing where it attaches to the bottom of your heel.

A common misdiagnosis for this condition is that of a bony heel spur. A heel spur may protrude from the bottom of your heel into the plantar fascia, however, it is now common podiatric medical practise to recognise that such a spur does not have to be present for you to suffer from these painful symptoms. In fact heel spurs can be commonly found in the general population who do not suffer from plantar heel pain.

HOW IS IT TREATED?

Treatment for your condition would involve taking a course of oral non-steroidal anti-inflammatory tablets, and stretching of the Achilles tendon. Other modalities such as ultra sound or therapies such as foot and ankle specialised manipulative techniques can also be employed.

Where your symptoms are only partially relieved then it is not unreasonable to consider the use of custom foot orthoses as a method to provide long-term settlement of this condition. Custom foot orthoses will adjust any underlying poor foot posture you may have causing excessive long-arch flattening. Such prescription insoles take the stress off your plantar fascia and allow the injured site to heal.

Steroid injections may also be used but these are best left as a final option if all else fails.