

Three Keys to Prevention and Treatment of Plantar Fasciitis

Plantar fasciitis is inflammation of the long band of tissue that runs on the underside of your foot from the heel to the base of the big toe and is a debilitating condition that decreases function. Plantar Fasciitis is caused by standing for long periods especially in unsupported footwear, such as flip-flops. Pain occurs on the underside of the heel as well as in the arch of your foot. This condition can last up to a year in duration without formal treatment. The following tips can help you avoid this painful, debilitating condition.

The first key to prevention and treatment of plantar fasciitis is attention to proper footwear and switching out footwear regularly. Flip-flops, crocs, and flats promote increased strain and tension for the plantar fascia. Shoes with good arch support and a soft heel are better choices. Brands of shoes we recommend include Brooks, Saucony, and Asics. If you cannot wear sneakers at work, contact your shoe or boot provider to see if they can recommend the best supportive shoe for you.

Over the counter orthotics are also a good option and supported by research in preventing and possibly eliminating plantar fasciitis symptoms. Spenco brand as well as orthotics sold at Dick's or Olympia sporting goods are good places to start.

The second key to prevention and treatment of plantar fasciitis is ankle and foot mobility. In patients with plantar fasciitis, there is a lack of dorsiflexion (toe toward your knee motion) and big toe extension. Both limitations cause increased stress and tension through the plantar fascia, thus making the tissue work harder during walking. One exercise to increase motion through your ankle joint and calf muscles is to stand on the edge of a stair and drop your heel down, hold 10-30 seconds, and then relax. For a targeted approach to the big toe, you can cross one leg over the other and move the big toe back as far as possible toward the top of your foot, hold 10 seconds, and relax.





The third key to prevention and treatment of plantar fasciitis is avoiding drastic changes such as suddenly running/walking 2 miles every day for a week if you are not accustomed to this level of activity. For any body part, severe changes to day-to-day function put you at risk for developing various conditions especially if you have a sedentary lifestyle. If this is inevitable such as a family vacation to Disney world, slowly start a walking program prior to the trip and allow your body to adapt to the increased activity.



If these strategies prove ineffective, it may be time to see a healthcare provider. A physical therapist can help treat inflamed tissues with several modalities and therapeutic taping. Physical therapy can build up the muscle tissue surrounding the plantar fascia as well as the fascia itself in order to better tolerate day-to-day activity and prevent further occurrence of the condition. A podiatrist is also a good option. They can suggest the correct type of orthotic for you, offer pain relieving shots, as well as a night brace that keeps the plantar fascia stretched out during the night to prevent those first few steps in the morning from being so painful.

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