

PLANTAR FASCIITIS

Heel pain, stone bruise, bone spurs, whatever you want to call it, it hurts. It's that first step in the morning that is painful or anytime you are sitting down and get up. It gets your attention. Whether you are a runner or an individual who is actively enjoying life, it affects what you want to do. It limits your activity, it dictates what you are going to do or not going to do, and it interferes with your life. It is an overuse syndrome and by understanding it is an overuse syndrome is how we effectively treat plantar fasciitis.

Your plantar fascia is your arch support ligament, without it your arch will collapse. With each step it helps propel you forward, like a spring on a diving board. Once irritated and/or inflamed, it takes time for it to heal. It didn't appear overnight and therefore it will not go away overnight. Since we are constantly on our feet, it requires the reduction of strain to our feet over time to give the tissues a chance to heal. If you learn to walk on your hands or spend six weeks on a remote beach, it will go away fairly quickly. Again it is the reduction of strain over time.

Okay, walking on our hands isn't practical and leaving work to spend six weeks on the sand for most of us isn't possible, so how does one reduce the strain level on our heel a chance to heal? (Notice the pun? Just checking to see if you are paying attention.) It takes a holistic approach, a multifaceted approach to treat heel pain, again, because we are constantly on our feet. On another page is our detailed approach to treating plantar fasciitis. Here, we will review it in its basic, core form.

- 1) **Look for ways to get off your feet.** If you have the opportunity to sit versus stand, sit. It is not so much as how much you are on your feet at any given moment, but how much you are on your feet during the day.
- 2) Exercise is good for the heart, body, and soul (or sole if you prefer). However during this time we recommend **cross training** such as cycling, swimming, elliptical machine instead of the high impact exercises instead of walking or running. As your heel pain improves then you can gradually, repeat gradually increase your activity level.
- 3) **Contrast bathing.** Take a heavy metal can such as a soup can, put it in the freezer, and allow it to freeze. Then take a tub of hot water, soak your foot in it for 10 minutes, and then roll your foot over the frozen can for 10 minutes. 10 minutes heat followed by 10 minutes cold. The heat relaxes the tissues and the cold can massage nature's anti-inflammatory into the deep tissues of the plantar fascia. Do this at least once a day, primarily at the end of the day because of the stress you have placed on the tissues. If you can do this periodically during the day, especially after exercise, that's better.
- 4) **Stretch. Stretch. Stretch.** Stretch your calf muscle 5 to 6 times a day periodically. You almost can't stretch too much. This is accomplished by doing the classic runner's stretch. From the calf muscle to the plantar fascia, this is basically a pulley system. By stretching the calf muscle you reduce the tension in the calf muscle and therefore you reduce the strain in the plantar fascia. There are countless stretches that are recommended however, we suggest you do this one and a lot of it.
- 5) **Wearing an orthotic in your shoe.** By wearing an orthotic in your shoe, you off-load the plantar fascia and therefore it does not have to work as hard. There are several over the counter orthotics that are available. Look for one that has a good

arch support and is cushioned for shock absorbing value. Hard orthotics can work, but they can be uncomfortable for day to day wear or exercising. We have several over the counter orthotics in our office that work well and are designed for this condition. Additionally, we have a pedorthist on staff who can modify them to fit your needs or create a custom set for you. This is important for those who run or work on their feet.

Other treatment options include immobilization, physical therapy, and cortisone injections. Though injections can work, this is a mechanical problem and therefore requires mechanical modifications (home protocol) to effectively treat the problem. Again, it is the reduction of stress/strain over time.

If the initial protocol does not produce the desired results over time, then we have the option of doing the Dolorclast procedure. The Dolorclast is extra corporeal shock wave therapy. It is a non-invasive therapy designed to jump-start the healing process for individuals with chronic plantar fasciitis. Contact our office at 214-256-7175 for more details.