

Boulder Office

5387 Manhattan Circle #200
Boulder, CO 80303

Steamboat Office

940 Central Park Drive
Steamboat Springs, CO 80487

Plantar Fasciitis

What is plantar fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis is a painful inflammation of the bottom of the foot between the ball of the foot and the heel.

How does it occur?

There are several possible causes of plantar fasciitis, including:

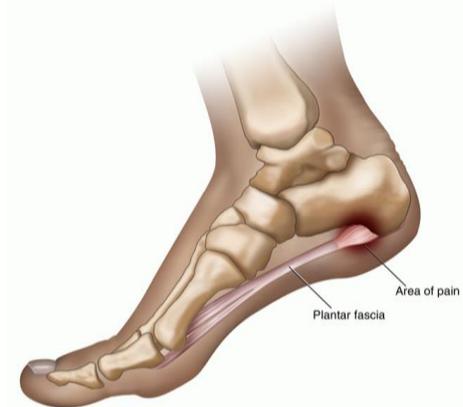
- wearing high heels
- gaining weight
- increased walking, standing, or stair-climbing

If you wear high-heeled shoes for long periods of time, the

tough, tendonlike tissue of the bottom of your foot can become shorter. This layer of tissue is called fascia. Pain occurs when you stretch fascia that has shortened. This painful stretching might happen, for example, when you walk barefoot after getting out of bed in the morning.

If you gain weight, you might be more likely to have plantar fasciitis, especially if you walk a lot or stand in shoes with poor heel cushioning. Normally there is a pad of fatty tissue under your heel bone. Weight gain might break down this fat pad and cause heel pain.

Runners may get plantar fasciitis when they change their workout and increase their mileage or frequency of workouts. It can also occur with a change in exercise surface or terrain, or if your shoes are worn out and don't provide enough cushion for your heels. If the arches of your foot are abnormally high or low, you are more likely to develop plantar fasciitis than if your arches are normal.



How is it diagnosed?

The diagnosis is usually made by taking your history and examining your foot. Imaging may be done to exclude other diagnoses. Some people may have a heel spur but the presence of this does not mean that it is causing your symptoms and removal of it may not relieve your pain. Many people have heel spurs but do not have foot pain.

How is it treated?

- Give your painful heel lots of rest. You may need to stay completely off your foot for several days when the pain is severe.
- Your healthcare provider may recommend or prescribe anti-inflammatory medicines ibuprofen or Aleve. These drugs decrease pain and inflammation. Resting your heel on an ice pack for a few minutes several times a day can also help.
- Try to cushion your foot. You can do this by wearing athletic shoes for awhile. Heel cushions can also be used. The cushions should be worn in both shoes. They are most helpful if you are overweight or an older adult.

Boulder Office

5387 Manhattan Circle #200
Boulder, CO 80303

Steamboat Office

940 Central Park Drive
Steamboat Springs, CO 80487

- Stretch your ankle and foot before getting out of bed in the morning or after sitting for prolonged periods of time.
- Your provider may recommend special arch supports or inserts for your shoes called orthotics, either custom-made or off the shelf. These supports can be particularly helpful if you have flat feet or high arches.
- Your provider may recommend an injection of a steroid to decrease inflammation.
- Lose weight if needed.
- A night splint may be recommended. This will keep the plantar fascia stretched while you are sleeping.
- Physical therapy for additional treatments may be recommended
- Surgery is rarely needed.

Plantar Fasciitis Rehabilitation Exercises

Towel stretch: Sit with one leg stretched out in front of you. Loop a towel around your toes and the ball of your foot and pull the towel toward your body keeping your knee straight. Hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds then relax. Repeat 3 times. This is especially important to do before getting out fo bed in the morning.



Standing calf stretch

Standing calf stretch: Facing a wall and with your shoes on, put your hands against the wall at about eye level. Keep one leg back with the heel on the floor, and the other leg forward. Turn your back foot slightly inward (as if you were pigeon-toed) as you slowly lean into the wall until you feel a stretch in the back of your calf. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat 3 times and then switch the position of your legs and repeat the exercise 3 times. Do this exercise several times each day. Repeat this exercise with your back knee bent.

Sitting plantar fascia stretch/massage: Sit in a chair and cross one foot over your other knee. Grab the base of your toes and pull them back toward your leg until you feel a comfortable stretch. Massage the bottom of your foot with the other hand. Hold 15 seconds and repeat 3 times.



Sitting plantar fascia stretch

Boulder Office

5387 Manhattan Circle #200
Boulder, CO 80303

Steamboat Office

940 Central Park Drive
Steamboat Springs, CO 80487



Frozen can/bottle roll: Roll your bare foot back and forth from your heel to your mid-arch over a frozen juice can or small plastic water bottle. Repeat for 3 to 5 minutes. This exercise is particularly helpful if done first thing in the morning.



Heel dips: Wear shoes for this exercise. Stand on a step and using both feet, rise up onto your toes. Lift the uninvolved leg and slowly lower yourself down on the involved leg until the ankle is fully flexed. Use both feet to again rise onto your toes. Perform 3 sets of 10.

Towel pickup: With your heel on the ground, pick up a towel with your toes. Release. Repeat 10 to 20 times. When this gets easy, add more resistance by placing a book or small weight on the towel.



Towel pickup