

# What is Plantar Fasciitis?

An information guide



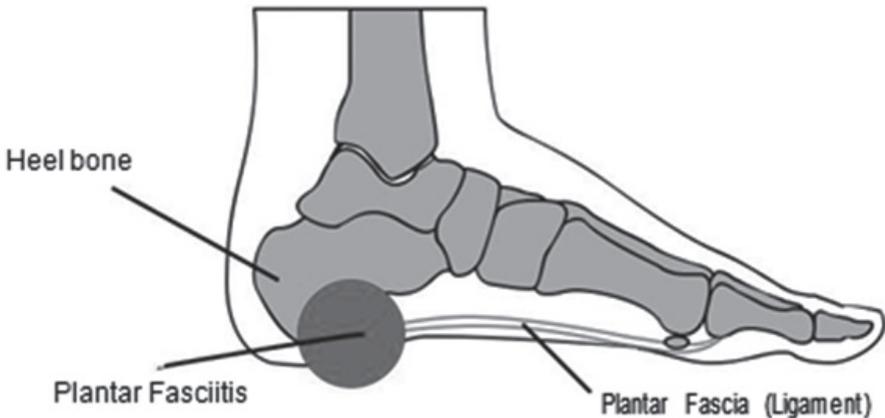
# What is Plantar Fasciitis?

The plantar fascia is a tough and flexible band of tissue that runs under the sole of the foot. It connects the heel bone with the bones of the foot, and acts as a kind of shock absorber to the foot.

With plantar fasciitis the pain usually builds up gradually and gets worse over time. It can also start from a particular injury. The pain is often severe and occurs when you place weight on your heel.

The pain is usually worse first thing in the morning, or when you first take a step after a period of inactivity. Walking usually improves the pain, but it often gets worse again after walking or standing for a long time.

In most cases, only one heel is affected, although estimates suggest that around a third of people have pain in both heels. Some people may limp or develop an abnormal walking style as they try to avoid placing weight on the affected heel.



## **Causes**

You are at an increased risk of developing plantar fasciitis if you:

- Are overweight or obese
- Have a job that involves spending long periods of time standing
- Wear incorrect footwear such as flat/thin soled shoes such as sandals or plimsolls or wearing old worn out shoes
- Have tight or weak calf muscles
- Have stiff joints in the foot
- Poorly manage a change in training intensity
- Have inflammatory arthritis

## **Self-help advice**

It's not always possible to prevent heel pain, but there are measures you can take to help avoid further episodes:

- Having a healthy weight.
- Looking after your feet by wearing footwear that's appropriate for your environment and day to day activities.
- Simple Gel heel cups from a pharmacy can be helpful to cushion the painful area
- Ideally, you should wear a laced shoe with a low to moderate heel. The shoe should have a sole that cushions your heel and supports your arches.
- If you do a physical activity, you should replace your sports shoes regularly. Most experts recommend replacing them after you have done about 500 miles in them.
- You should always warm up before exercising and stretch after, and make strength and flexibility training part of your regular exercise routine.

## How common is it?

Plantar fasciitis is a common foot condition. An estimated 1 in 10 people will have at least one episode of it at some point in their life.

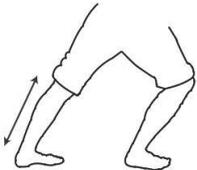
People who run or jog regularly, and older adults who are 40 to 60 years of age, are the two main groups affected by this condition.

## Exercises for Plantar Fasciitis

This programme needs to be completed for at least three months

### 1. Stretching Exercises (If advised by your Physiotherapist)

#### A - Gastroc Stretch



Take position as above, feet pointing forwards and heels in contact with the floor. Slowly take your hips and pelvis forward. You should feel a stretch in your calf muscle area. Hold for 20 seconds and repeat 3 times

## B - Soleus Stretch



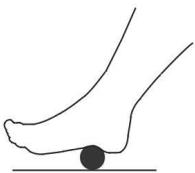
Keep the same position as stretch 1 but bend the back knee while keeping the heels on the floor. Again you should feel this stretch in your lower calf area and feel slightly different from stretch 1. Hold for 20 seconds and repeat 3 times.

## C - Flexor Hallucis Longus Stretch



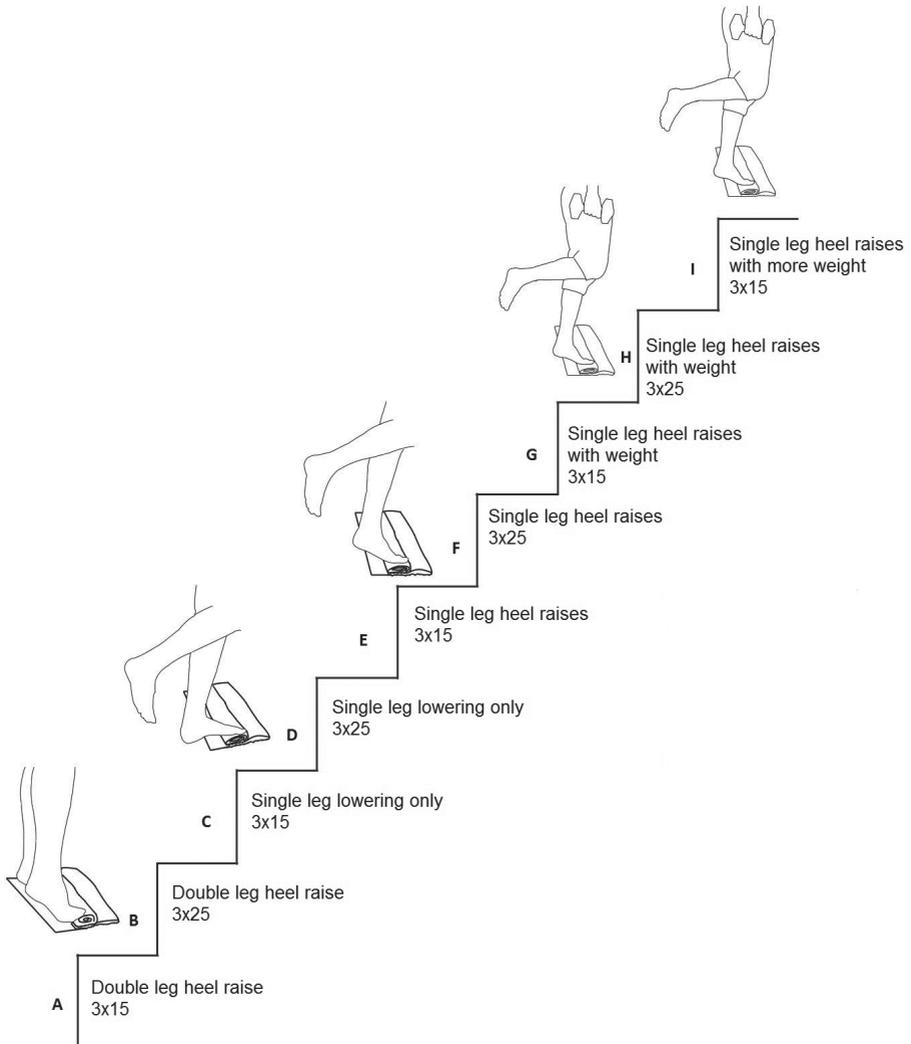
Again in the same position as above, bring your back foot forward and place your big toe against your heel so that it stretches your toe upwards. The muscle you are stretching is attached to your toe. Hold for 20 seconds and repeat 3 times.

## D - Ice Roll



Place a small plastic bottle of frozen water under your foot and roll it forwards and backwards. Try and do this for 5-10 minutes per day

## 2. Strengthening Exercises



## **Progression Speed**

Your physiotherapist will advise you on the speed you should progress your exercise and the level you are aiming towards. Progression is not just about being able to do the exercise but can do it correctly. It should be tolerable,

It is normal to feel pain with the exercise, this is what we expect. However, if the pain becomes disabling please stop. Resume the strength training the following day.

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