

# Plantarfasciopathy

## Advice

This condition has previously been known as Plantarfasciitis and "Policeman's Heel". The plantarfascia is the thick material beneath the skin that runs from your heel to the base of your toes, and acts to help maintain the arch of your foot. It can become painful when it is overloaded or used in an abnormal way often as a result of altered lower limb biomechanics. As such the common way to correct this condition is to restore normal biomechanics to the lower limb. This can mean quite a long recovery as the body and tissues adapt to exercises. As it is an overuse /biomechanical problem, rather than an 'injury' it is unlikely to just go-away by itself. Treatment includes rest, support, ice, painkillers, exercise and physiotherapy.

## What can I do to help?

**Ice:** Roll your foot over a small frozen bottle of water for 10-20 minutes (beware of ice burns), some people also find rolling their foot over a golf ball can help "massage" the sore area.

**Pain relief:** Simple painkillers (like paracetamol) or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, NSAIDS, (like ibuprofen) are available over the counter and can be very effective but don't use them for more than 2 weeks without seeking medical advice. You should carefully read the Patient Information Leaflet that is provided with this medication.

It is advisable to consult your GP or pharmacist before taking additional pain relief if you are currently:

- taking any form of medication
- have any other pre-existing medical conditions
- pregnant

**Support:** Some people will find their symptoms benefit from using an arch supporting insole or gel heel pads. These are readily available from your local pharmacy. You can try these before seeing a physiotherapist or wait and seek their advice before trying them.

**Exercise:** It is important to keep exercising a painful plantarfascia in a non-painful way. This will help stimulate the tissue to become stronger and less painful in time.

## Exercises to try:

Please try to complete the following exercise programme 2-3 times a day. Some discomfort is normal as you may be moving muscles which are tight or stiff, however it is unhelpful if this pain continues for more than 30 minutes following your exercises. If this is the case, please reduce the distance you move or the duration of the hold. If your pain continues to worsen, please stop the exercises.

### 1. Plantar fascia loading heel raise



On a step, holding on for support if needed. Use a towel to raise your big toe.  
Push up onto your toes taking 3 seconds to get to the top of the movement. Once at the top, hold position for 2 seconds.  
Then slowly lower your heel as far as it can go, taking 3 seconds.  
Repeat between 10-15 times.

### 2. Soleus stretch



Stand with your hands on the wall, shoulder width apart and one foot in front of the other.  
Bend your front and back legs, keeping your back heel flat on the floor.  
Push your weight forwards into the wall until you feel a stretch in the calf of the back leg.  
Hold for 30 seconds.

### 3. Gastrocnemius Stretch



Stand leaning against a wall.  
Place the leg to be stretched behind you.  
Lean forwards on your front leg, keeping back leg straight and heel down to the ground.  
If you cannot feel a stretch, place your back leg a little further back, but remember to heel to ground.  
Hold for 30 seconds.