

Heel Pain: Care Instructions

Your Care Instructions

You can have heel pain from an injury or from everyday overuse, such as running or walking a lot. Plantar fasciitis is the most common cause of heel pain. In this condition, the bottom of your foot from the front of the heel to the base of the toes is sore and hard to walk on.

Your heel can get better with rest, anti-inflammatory pain medicines, and stretching exercises.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Rest your feet often. Reduce your activity to a level that lets you avoid pain. If possible, do not run or walk on hard surfaces.
- Take anti-inflammatory medicines to reduce heel pain. These include ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and naproxen (Aleve). Read and follow all instructions on the label.
- Put ice or a cold pack on your heel for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Try to do this every 1 to 2 hours for the next 3 days (when you are awake). Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin.
- If ice isn't helping after 2 or 3 days, try heat, such as a heating pad set on low.
- If your doctor says it is okay, try these calf stretches. Tight calf muscles can cause heel pain or make it worse.
 - Stand about 1 foot from a wall. Place the palms of both hands against the wall at chest level and lean forward against the wall. Put the leg you want to stretch about a step behind your other leg. Keep your back heel on the floor and bend your front knee until you feel a stretch in the back leg. Hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat the exercise 2 to 4 times a session. Do 3 to 4 sessions a day.
 - Sit down on the floor or a mat with your feet stretched in front of you. Roll up a towel lengthwise, and loop it over the ball of your foot. Holding the towel at both ends, gently pull the towel toward you to stretch your foot. Hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat the exercise 2 to 4 times a session. Do 3 to 4 sessions a day.
- Wear a night splint if your doctor suggests it. A night splint holds your foot with the toes pointed up. This position gives the bottom of your foot a constant, gentle stretch.
- Wear shoes with good arch support. Athletic shoes or shoes with a well-cushioned sole are good choices.
- Try a heel lift, heel cup or shoe insert (orthotic) to help cushion your heel. You can buy these at many shoe stores. Use them in both shoes, even if only one foot hurts.
- Maintain a healthy weight. This puts less strain on your feet.

When should you call for help?

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have heel pain with fever, redness, or warmth in your heel.
- You have numbness or tingling in your heel.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You cannot put weight on the sore foot.
- Your heel pain lasts more than 2 weeks.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.healthwise.net/ed>

Enter **S299** in the search box to learn more about "**Heel Pain: Care Instructions**".

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