

# Plantar Fasciitis: Care Instructions



## Overview

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Plantar fasciitis is pain and inflammation of the plantar fascia, the tissue at the bottom of your foot that connects the heel bone to the toes. The plantar fascia also supports the arch. If you strain the plantar fascia, it can develop small tears and cause heel pain when you stand or walk.

Plantar fasciitis can be caused by running or other sports. It also may occur in people who are overweight or who have high arches or flat feet. You may get plantar fasciitis if you walk or stand for long periods, or have a tight Achilles tendon or calf muscles.

You can improve your foot pain with rest and other care at home. It might take a few weeks to a few months for your foot to heal completely.

**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?

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- 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 pain medicines exactly as directed.
  - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
  - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, take an over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medicine for pain and swelling, such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or naproxen (Aleve). Read and follow all instructions on the label.

- Use ice massage to help with pain and swelling. You can use an ice cube or an ice cup several times a day. To make an ice cup, fill a paper cup with water and freeze it. Cut off the top of the cup until a half-inch of ice shows. Hold onto the remaining paper to use the cup. Rub the ice in small circles over the area for 5 to 7 minutes.
- Contrast baths, which alternate hot and cold water, can also help reduce swelling. But because heat alone may make pain and swelling worse, end a contrast bath with a soak in cold water.
- Wear a night splint if your doctor suggests it. A night splint holds your foot with the toes pointed up and the foot and ankle at a 90-degree angle. This position gives the bottom of your foot a constant, gentle stretch.
- Do simple exercises such as calf stretches and towel stretches 2 to 3 times each day, especially when you first get up in the morning. These can help the plantar fascia become more flexible. They also make the muscles that support your arch stronger. Hold these stretches for 15 to 30 seconds per stretch. Repeat 2 to 4 times.
  - Stand about 1 foot from a wall. Place the palms of both hands against the wall at chest level. Lean forward against the wall, keeping one leg with the knee straight and heel on the ground while bending the knee of the other leg.
  - 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.
- Wear shoes with good arch support. Athletic shoes or shoes with a well-cushioned sole are good choices.
- Replace athletic shoes regularly.
- Try heel cups or shoe inserts (orthotics) to help cushion your heel. You can buy these at many shoe stores.
- Put on your shoes as soon as you get out of bed. Going barefoot or wearing slippers may make your pain worse.
- Reach and stay at a good weight for your height. This puts less strain on your feet.

## When should you call for help?

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**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have heel pain with fever, redness, or warmth in your heel.
- You cannot put weight on the sore foot.

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

- You have numbness or tingling in your heel.
- Your heel pain lasts more than 2 weeks.

### Where can you learn more?

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Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/PatientEd>

Enter **X351** in the search box to learn more about "**Plantar Fasciitis: Care Instructions**".

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