

# Heel Pain (Plantar Fasciitis)

Heel pain is most often caused by plantar fasciitis, a condition that is sometimes also called heel spur syndrome when a spur is present. Heel pain may also be due to other causes, such as a stress fracture, tendonitis, arthritis, nerve irritation, or, rarely, a cyst.

Because there are several potential causes, it is important to have heel pain properly diagnosed. A foot and ankle surgeon is able to distinguish between all the possibilities and determine the underlying source of your heel pain.

## What Is Plantar Fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis is an inflammation of the band of tissue (the plantar fascia) that extends from the heel to the toes. In this condition, the fascia first becomes irritated and then inflamed, resulting in heel pain.

## Causes

The most common cause of plantar fasciitis relates to faulty structure of the foot. For example, people who have problems with their arches, either overly flat feet or high-arched feet, are more prone to developing plantar fasciitis.

Wearing non-supportive footwear on hard, flat surfaces puts abnormal strain on the plantar fascia and can also lead to plantar fasciitis. This is particularly evident when one's job requires long hours on the feet. Obesity may also contribute to plantar fasciitis.

## Symptoms

The symptoms of plantar fasciitis are:

- Pain on the bottom of the heel
- Pain in the arch of the foot
- Pain that is usually worse upon arising
- Pain that increases over a period of months

People with plantar fasciitis often describe the pain as worse when they get up in the morning or after they've been sitting for long periods of time. After a few minutes of walking the pain decreases, because walking stretches the fascia. For some people the pain subsides but returns after spending long periods of time on their feet.

## Diagnosis

To arrive at a diagnosis, the foot and ankle surgeon will obtain your medical history and examine your foot. Throughout this process the surgeon rules out all the possible causes for your heel pain other than plantar fasciitis.

In addition, diagnostic imaging studies such as x-rays or other imaging modalities may be used to distinguish the different types of heel pain. Sometimes heel spurs are found in patients with plantar fasciitis, but these are rarely a source of pain. When they are present, the condition may be diagnosed as plantar fasciitis/heel spur syndrome.

**Call to schedule your appointment today.**

