

What is Plantar Fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis involves pain and inflammation of a thick, ligament-like band of tissue, called the plantar fascia, that runs across the bottom of your foot and connects your heel bone to your toes. This band pulls on the heel bone, raising the arch of your foot as it pushes off the ground. If your foot moves incorrectly, the plantar fascia could become strained. The fascia may swell and its tiny fibers may begin to fray causing plantar fasciitis.

Causes

Plantar fasciitis is usually caused by improper foot mechanics. If your foot flattens out too much, the fascia may overextend and swell. If your foot flattens too little, the fascia may hurt from being pulled too tight.

Symptoms

Stabbing foot pain that usually occurs with your first steps in the morning. Once your foot limbers up, the pain of plantar fasciitis normally lessens, but may return after prolonged movement or after rest. The pain usually happens on the inside of the foot, close to the spot where your heel and arch meet.

Treatment

Your podiatrist may ask you about your symptoms first. Where does it hurt? When and how often? Next, he or she may examine your foot and feel for damaged ligaments, displaced bones or joints and inflamed tendons. Your podiatrist may also watch you walk to see if your symptoms are caused by improper bio-mechanics. X-rays may be taken to see if there is a stress fracture of the heel bone or a heel spur.

To relieve mild symptoms try aspirin, ibuprofen, or other medications as directed. Rubbing ice on the affected area may also help. If your pain is due to poor foot mechanics, custom molded orthotics, shoe inserts, may help. To reduce severe pain and swelling, your podiatrist may prescribe injections or pills. Physical therapy, such as stretching or ultrasound may also be advised. To reduce symptoms caused by irregular foot bio-mechanics, your podiatrist may tape them or use strappings that will support the arch and temporarily controls movement. Night splints may also be used. It may also help to avoid running on hard or uneven ground, wear house slippers that support your arch and lose excess weight.

Surgery

Your podiatrist may want to do a procedure if all other treatments don't control the pain. In surgery, the plantar fascia is partially cut to release tension. As you get better, fibrous tissues fill in the space between the heel bone and the plantar fascia.