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What is Plantar Fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis is a very common condition which put simply is inflammation of the plantar fascia. This is a strong band of tissue (like a ligament) that stretches from your heel to your middle foot bones. It supports the arch of your foot and also acts as a shock absorber in your foot. Usually the pain will ease in time however, fascia tissue much like ligament tissue heals quite slowly. It can take several months or more before it is resolved. The following treatments are designed to speed recovery, a combination of these can be very effective.

Rest your foot

This should be done as much as possible. Avoid running, excess walking, standing for long periods and undue stretching of your sole. Gentle walking and exercises described below are acceptable.

Can Rolling

Rolling a can forward and backward in the arch of the foot in the mornings prior to standing can help reduce the pain that usually occurs when first standing. Alternatively, a **night splint** can be worn, which keeps the plantar fascia in a stretched position while sleeping.

Heel cushions and arch supports

You can buy various pads and insoles to cushion the heel and/or support the arch of the foot. By stabilising the foot, they reduce the amount of movement made and strain placed upon the fascia. These work best when worn in your shoes at all times. Your podiatrist will recommend the best ones for your foot type.

Pain relief

Painkillers such as paracetamol will often ease the pain. Furthermore, anti-inflammatories such as Ibuprofen and Voltarol can be useful in relieving the symptoms and increasing the rate of healing as can the application of an ice pack for 15-20 minutes at a time.

Exercises

Regular gentle stretching of your Achilles tendon and plantar fascia may help relieve symptoms. This is because many people with plantar fasciitis have tightness of the rear leg muscles causing excessive pulling on the back of the heel and a shortening of the plantar fascia. Your podiatrist will recommend exercises based on your particular needs.

Steroid injection

This option may be considered by your GP or on the recommendation of your podiatrist if your pain remains despite the conservative treatments. It is often very effective however, it is not always successful, it can be a painful procedure and may take several attempts before the problem is resolved.