

Plantar Fasciitis

Introduction:

- Plantar fasciitis is the most common condition of heel pain. The condition occurs when the long fibrous plantar fascia ligament along the bottom of the foot develops tears in the tissue resulting in pain and inflammation. The pain of plantar fasciitis is usually located close to where the fascia attaches to the heel bone.

Symptoms:

- most common complaint is the burning, stabbing, or aching pain in the heel of the foot
- heel pain is particular acute in the morning as we climb out of the bed and place pressure on the ligament
- Pain usually diminished as the tissue warms up but may easily return again after prolonged standing or weight bearing

Causes:

- Overload of physical activity and exercise. Athletes are particularly prone to plantar fasciitis as repetitive or excessive stress on the tissue can lead to tear and inflammation
- Certain types of arthritis can cause inflammation to develop in the tendon resulting in plantar fasciitis
- Diabetes mellitus is another contributing factor to plantar fasciitis
- Wearing incorrect shoes can lead to abnormal weight distribution and place significant stress to the plantar fascia ligament
- Conditions like flat foot, high arches, pronation or having an abnormal gait can alter the mechanics of the foot and overload the fascia tissue
- Aging causes the fascia tissue weaker and more prone to be damaged
- Overweight can easily cause injury to the fascia tissue
- Pregnancy can add a few extra pounds and cause hormonal changes that lead to plantar fasciitis
- People of occupations requiring prolonged standing or walking are also at risks

Treatment:

1) Conservative treatment:

- successful in most instances
- resting the feet, modification of activity, ice therapy
- Pain killer and NSAID can reduce pain and inflammation
- An orthotic device placed in the shoes can significantly reduce heel pain , promote healing to reverse plantar fasciitis
- Night splints to keep the plantar fascia stretched to promote healing
- Casting
- Physical therapy
- Corticosteroid injection
- Extracorporeal shock wave therapy (ESWT)

2) Operative treatment

- Surgery is the last resort and reserved for those suffering from chronic and severe plantar fasciitis
- The aim of surgery is to release the tension on the fascia ligament

Prevention:

- Preventing plantar fasciitis is crucial
- Maintaining healthy body weight
- Correct shoe wear to provide cushioning and support throughout the heel and arch of the foot so that the weight is distributed evenly throughout the foot
- Replace old shoes before they wear out
- Avoid walking on bare foot especially on hard surfaces
- Adequate warm up and start off slow to prevent sudden or excessive stress on the tissue