

RunSMART®: Plantar Fasciitis (Heel Pain)

General Information

The following recommendations are appropriate if you are healthy and cleared to run by your health care provider.

Plantar Fasciitis

Plantar fasciitis is a common type of heel pain. It occurs when the band of connective tissue (fascia) running along the sole of your foot (plantar) is inflamed. The band of tissue connects your heel to the ball of your foot and supports your arch.

If the band of tissue is stretched over time beyond its normal distance, it may develop small tears where it attaches to your heel. This leads to inflammation and pain.

Causes

You may develop plantar fasciitis if you:

- run and jump a lot
- stand for long periods of time
- wear shoes that don't have good support
- are overweight
- are female
- are pregnant
- have arthritis
- have tight Achilles tendons or calf muscles.

Symptoms

Your heel may be very painful with your first few steps in the morning, after sitting or after standing or walking.

You may also have:

- severe pain which causes you to change the way you move
- less pain with increased levels of activity (such as walking or running), but your pain gets worse toward the end of the activity.

Diagnosis

A diagnosis is made with a physical exam. Your health care provider will do special tests that check for tenderness, flexibility and muscle strength. They will also review your health history and may screen for other causes of pain.

Treatment

In most cases, plantar fasciitis does not require surgery or invasive procedures (such as injections) to stop pain and reverse damage. Every person's body responds to plantar fasciitis treatment differently and recovery times may vary.

Your health care provider may recommend a number of treatments. These may include:

- rest
- avoiding activities or exercise that could make the pain worse

(over)

- taking nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) to relieve pain, inflammation, swelling and stiffness
- deep massage to the fascia
- ice massage to the fascia
 - Roll a frozen bottle of water back and forth on the bottom of your foot for 5 minutes. This will help with inflammation and help relax the fascia.
- plantar fascia and calf stretches
 - Sit on the floor with your legs stretched out in front of you.
 - Loop a towel around the top of your injured foot.
 - Slowly pull the towel toward you, keeping your body straight.
 - Stop pulling when you feel a gentle stretch.
 - Hold for 15 to 30 seconds and then relax.
 - Repeat 10 times.

- wearing shoe inserts (orthotics) to help with arch support and relax the fascia
- getting a professional shoe wear assessment to make sure your shoes have the right support.

If treatment does not fix the problem, you may need care by a podiatrist (foot care specialist) or physical therapist.

Training

There are options to maintain training without continued stress to the plantar fascia. These include:

- swimming
- pool running
- walking or light jogging on soft surfaces
- cycling.

Do not do any exercise that places a strain on the plantar fascia, including high-impact running or jumping positions.