

# Heel Pain

## Service User Information Leaflet

NHS Fife provides accessible communication in a variety of formats including for people who are speakers of community languages, who require Easy Read versions, who speak BSL, read Braille or use Audio formats.

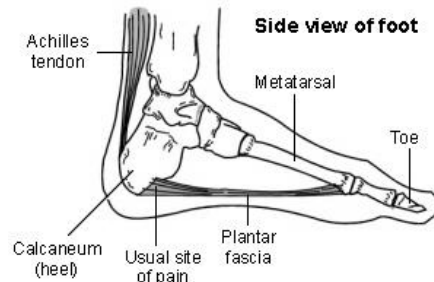
NHS Fife SMS text service number 07805800005 is available for people who have a hearing or speech impairment.

To find out more about accessible formats contact: [fife-UHB.EqualityandHumanRights@nhs.net](mailto:fife-UHB.EqualityandHumanRights@nhs.net)  
or phone 01592 729130

Issue No. 2.4.1.7	Date of Issue: Sept 2016	Review Date: Oct 2022 If review date has passed the content will apply until the next version is published
-------------------	--------------------------	---

## Heel Pain

**Heel Pain** can occur because of wear and tear in the plantar fascia; this is a thick band of tissue on the bottom of the foot. This band of tissue runs from the heel to the base of the toes. It acts like a rubber band to create tension and to maintain the arch of the foot.



When placed under too much stress the plantar fascia overstretches causing small tears in the tissue. This then results in pain within the fascia and surrounding tissues. These tears repair with scar tissue, which is less flexible than the normal fascia, and can cause tightness in the fascia.

## Symptoms

1. Pain at the base of the heel which can also spread throughout the length of the foot.
2. Pain can be most severe in the mornings on getting out of bed and with the first few steps.

## Causes

- Stress, tension and pulling on the plantar fascia
- Tight calf muscles and tight Achilles tendons
- Flat feet (low arches)
- High arches and rigid feet
- Overtraining
- Continually walking on concrete floors
- Wearing of unsupportive shoes or poor cushioning on soles of shoes
- Excess weight

## Pain relief

Apply an ice pack to the plantar fascia wrapped in a damp towel for 10 minutes, twice a day.

An alternative way of using ice is to fill a plastic 500ml drinks bottle with water and then freeze it. Apply the ice by rolling the bottle under the foot with the layer of towel between the ice and the foot to avoid an ice burn.

## Footwear

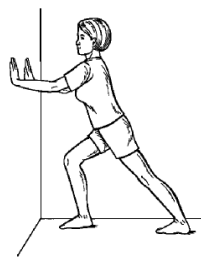
Shoes that are worn or give poor support may increase the problem. A well fitted shoe that gives good support is recommended. Arch supports may be beneficial and cushioned or silicone insoles may give some relief.

## Stretching

Stretching the plantar fascia can help ease the pain of putting your foot on the floor after sitting or before rising in the morning. (A) Sit and cross your affected leg over the other leg, holding your toes. Pull them back towards your shin until you feel a stretch in the arch of your foot. (B) Stand holding onto wall or chair non painful foot in front of the painful foot. Lean your body forwards keeping heels on the floor.



A



B

These stretches should be held for 30 seconds and repeated 10 times, three times a day, especially first thing in the morning and after prolonged sitting.

## Massage

Massaging the painful areas gently with your fingers may give pain relief. If there is a specific tender spot, massage this with the pad of your middle finger in a circular motion for 30 seconds.

Alternatively place a golf ball on the floor and gently roll the foot over the ball. Target tender areas and exert enough pressure that you only feel a little tenderness. Massage can be done for 5-10 minutes a day.

### **Exercises**

Place a towel on the floor and pull it towards you using your toes. Grab more of the towel with your toes and pull, release, then grab and pull some more until you run out of towel. Repeat 10 times.

### **Alternative Exercises**

Swimming, treading water, cycling

Reduce weight bearing exercises that place strain on the plantar fascia e.g. running and football.

- Ice can be applied after exercise if the pain has been exacerbated.
- Gradually progress your training programme.

If your symptoms fail to improve following the advice in this leaflet please contact your doctor.

For Further Advice:

[www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints](http://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints)