# Plantar Fasciitis

Plantar fasciitis, sometimes referred to as "heel spur", is inflammation and probable partial tear of the plantar fascia ligament on the bottom of the foot. The plantar fascia (*plantar* = bottom of foot and *fascia* = ligamentous tissue) begins at the bottom of the heel bone and continues to the ball of the foot, where it attaches to soft tissues. Because of this the most common place of injury is the heel area, as the weakest attachment is here.

The injury is usually caused by wearing unsupportive shoes, possibly on an uneven surface, then losing your step slightly. When your foot tries to stabilize, then injury occurs. Another factor that will predispose you to the injury is tight posterior leg muscles (hamstring and calf muscles). Many people do not stretch their legs daily. I believe that every person should stretch the legs 1 min each, daily, and more if they are active. A lot of patients think that because they do a lot of walking they don't need to stretch, but it is quite the opposite. The *more* you exercise, the more stretching you should be doing.

This condition is treated by supporting and stabilizing the fascia with strappings or tapings of the foot, proper shoegear at all times and stretching. If these measures don't work I will usually add a night splint, which keeps the calf muscle stretched to full length while sleeping, and possibly a steroid shot in the heel. These secondary treatments are hardly ever necessary.

Compliance is a big factor here though, as the people who usually have this happen either don't like to wear shoes, especially good supportive ones, and may not want to spend 6-10 minutes stretching daily until the pain is gone.

If the primary treatment works there is still a chance of recurrence. If this happens I will fit the patient for a custom made or OTC orthotic device which will support and stabilize the ligament on a more permanent basis.

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