



Plantar fasciitis or "heel spur pain" is the most common cause of pain under the heel. Most patients complain of the pain when they first get out of bed in the morning or when they stand up after being seated. Once they are up and moving around for a while the pain usually improves. The pain is usually located under the center of the heel, but can also extend into the arch.

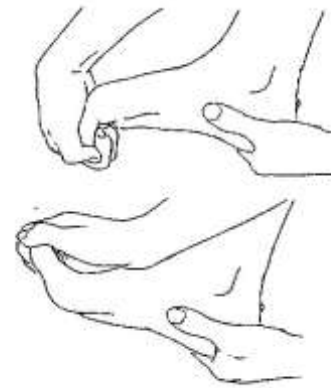
The average age of patients who develop plantar fasciitis is 45. It is twice as common in women as men. It also occurs more frequently in people who are overweight. Plantar fasciitis is caused by small tears in the ligament along the bottom of the foot called the plantar fascia. Only 50% of patients have an actual bone spur underneath the heel bone, and this is NOT believed to be the cause of the pain.

More than 90% of cases of plantar fasciitis improve without surgery or injections by 10 months. Treatment focuses on:

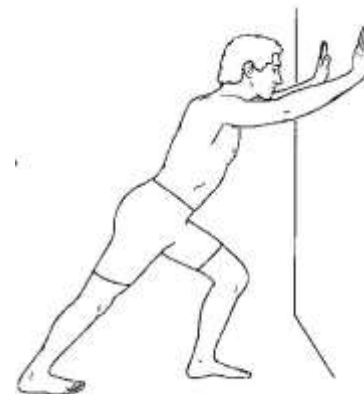
- 1) Stretching exercises for the Achilles tendon and plantar fascia ligament
- 2) Silicone heel cushions inserted into comfortable walking shoes
- 3) A night splint or boot to wear to sleep at night.

A cortisone injection works very well initially, but has less long term benefit. We use cortisone injections, but carefully and only when other treatments have failed, since repeated injections can cause a rupture of the plantar fascia or thinning of the heel fat pad. If all the above treatments have failed shock wave therapy or surgery can be considered.

Exercise 1: With one hand grasp toes and pull ankle and toes up towards shin to stretch plantar fascia. With the other hand massage plantar fascia ligament in the arch.



Exercise 2: Stand against wall with painful foot back, leg straight, and forward leg bent. Keeping heel on floor, lean into wall until stretch is felt in calf and hold.



Exercise 3: Roll the arch of your foot back and forth over a tennis ball to stretch the plantar fascia ligament.

