

Plantar Fasciitis (Heel Pain).

What is plantar fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis is usually an overuse injury causing heel pain and foot pain. The plantar fascia is a ligament in the inside of the arch that runs as a band from under the heel to the front of the foot (See figure 1). A tear or strain can occasionally occur at the origin of the plantar fascia and the result is an inflammation in the heel and subsequent pain. This can occur in sports like football where jumping is required. Most commonly however, plantar fasciitis occurs over a period of time without any noticeable specific incident or accident.

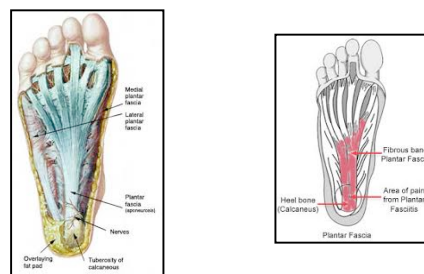


Figure 1: The Plantar Fascia

What are the symptoms?

The player will usually notice heel pain at the origin of the arch ligament when weight is put on the foot (See Figure 2). Pain can be felt here, if standing on tiptoes - with tenderness and swelling under the heel. Occasionally numbness along the outside of the sole of the foot can also be felt (See Figure 2). Pain is usually worse first thing in the morning, when the player gets out of bed. After a few minutes the pain eases as the foot gets warmed up, but can get worse again during the day especially if you are sitting for long periods and after training. If a player over pronates (rolls their foot inwards), then they may be prone to this injury because as the foot rolls in, the arch ligament is stretched more, putting more strain on it.



Figure 2: Pain at Plantar Fascia.



What can the player do?

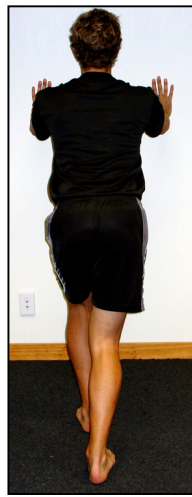
Initially the player must rest. When a player has no pain walking, they could try jogging, running, then training. The player may be able to strap their own foot. Strapping can help the foot get “the rest” it needs by supporting the plantar fascia and taking some of the stress and forces off it.



Strapping

If the player’s symptoms do not settle they should see a sports injury professional - a sports podiatrist, physiotherapist or sports doctor.

What can a sports injury professional do?



There are a number of treatment options available to treat plantar fasciitis – depending on the cause and how long the player has had the symptoms. A physiotherapist can advise stretching (to the calf muscle), or apply strapping and sports massage techniques to reduce the pain – either to the plantar fascia or calf muscle (See Figure 3). A sports podiatrist can examine a player’s biomechanics – the way they walk and run and prescribe orthotics or heel pad, if appropriate (See Figure 4). An x-ray is only required with persistent symptoms. Sometimes a sports doctor will prescribe anti-inflammatory medications if the symptoms are persistent. All the sports injury professionals will advise some form of rest from soccer initially to allow healing to take place, then advise on a gradual return to running and training.

Stretching of the Calf Muscle.



Figure 3: Sports Massage



Figure 4:
Orthotics &
Heel Pads.

