

Foot Pain – Plantar Fasciitis

By Dennis Schepmann, MPT, CWS

Heel pain is one of the most common problems we runners face. However, if you are experiencing nagging foot pain that seems to be getting worse, help is available.

Plantar fasciitis is the most common orthopedic foot problem that doctors treat. It is an injury or inflammation of the tissue on the bottom of your foot that extends from the heel to the toes. It is typically caused by an increase in exercise (such as training for the Pear Blossom Run), spending more time on your feet, or a sudden increase in your weight. A classic symptom of this injury is foot pain that occurs when you first step out of the bed in the morning. Pain also may be felt when walking or running, or walking after you have been sitting for a period of time.

Treatment for this injury includes “relative rest”, ice, stretching, strengthening, medications, and possibly night splints. “Relative rest” is a temporary decrease of the running or jogging program, but a continuation of exercise through swimming, biking, or other activities that reduces the amount of weight placed upon the foot. Applying an ice pack to the bottom of your foot will assist in reducing the pain. A stretching program involves stretching the calf muscles and the plantar fascia. A strengthening program will target these same muscles after the flexibility and pain levels have improved. Anti-inflammatory medications are often prescribed but you should consult your physician prior to initiating this method of treatment. Night splints maintain the injured tissue in a continuously stretched position and have been shown in research studies to be very helpful in resolving plantar fasciitis. Proper footwear and inserts are vital.

If plantar fasciitis is hindering your activity levels, talk with your health care provider or a physical therapist about additional treatment options. Good luck, and enjoy your running!

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Reference: *Clinical Orthopaedic Rehabilitation*. Brotzman, 1996.