

# What is plantar fasciitis?

The plantar fascia is a band of connective tissue that runs from the heel to the ball of the foot. It helps keep the bones of the foot in place. And it helps you move when you walk or run.

When the plantar fascia is overloaded or overstretched, you can get tiny tears in this band of tissue, called “microtears”. These small tears often lead to painful inflammation – and that is called plantar fasciitis.

The most common place to feel pain is in your heels.

## Causes of plantar fasciitis

Plantar fasciitis can be caused in two ways:

- a trauma, such as stepping on a hard object, or
- over time through repeated overstressing, such as running.

The most common reasons for plantar fasciitis are:

- increasing physical activity
- obesity or pregnancy
- poorly constructed shoes
- feet that roll inwards or outwards
- tight calf muscles
- ankles with a restricted range of motion
- weak leg and foot muscles
- your walking style, such as toe walking or heavy heel striking
- increasing age, and
- difference in the length of your legs.

## Symptoms

The symptoms can be different for everyone. And the symptoms can develop gradually or suddenly. You typically feel pain in your heel or along the bottom of your foot, which is your plantar fascial band.

For many people, the pain is worse in the morning when they first get out of bed, and after they have been sitting for a while. The pain can also return at the end of the day.

Some people feel most pain when they have been standing for a long time.

Many people change the way they walk to avoid pain – often without thinking about it. Typically, they shorten their stride and try to avoid walking on their heels.

When you have plantar fasciitis, your feet may hurt all the time.



## Treatment

The time you take to recover depends on many things. For example, how long you have been suffering inflammation and how active you are. Your symptoms are likely to start improving in six to eight weeks with conservative treatment, but it can take longer.

Conservative treatment includes:

- “mobilising” or releasing your stuck joints
- stretches
- rehabilitation and strengthening exercises
- prescribing orthotics or correcting your existing pair
- wearing better shoes
- dry needling
- wearing padding inside your shoes, and
- wearing compressing socks.

Plantar fasciitis can be a painful, debilitating condition. However, with the right treatment it can be managed well.