

## What to do if you've got Plantar Fasciitis

Plantar Fasciitis (PF) is a very common foot condition that primarily affects the underside of the heels, but can extend into the mid foot and inside arch areas. It can affect anyone as it is caused by a large variation of factors.



The plantar fascia is a strong, collagenous structure that runs from the heel, under the foot spreading out to attach to the toes. It has a key role in supporting the foot and with shock absorption. Did you know that when you run, at least 4 x your body weight of force goes through your feet!

Two common reasons for developing this problem are; if you have either “flat feet” or a “high arch”. Either of these foot types can put increased stresses through the plantar fascia which causes the tissue to break down, become damaged, inflamed and above all else painful. The image below demonstrates the various different foot types:



Plantar Fasciitis is commonly seen in sports such as dancing and running, but equally may be seen in the patient who has been away on holiday and done excessive walking in non-supportive shoes for example. A key sign of PF is experiencing pain in your foot/feet first thing in the morning when you first step out of

bed, or the first few steps you take if you've been sitting down for a prolonged period. The heel is often tender to touch and will frequently get worse the more you walk after an initial period of relief.

To affectively treat this condition it is key to know what is causing the problem. There are many things including tight calves, hamstrings or even gluteal muscles that can lead to developing PF. A study conducted in 2008 found that there were disparities between the strength of hip muscles on the affected side versus the non-affected side in the presence of PF on one foot. It is highly recommended that you attend an assessment to establish the exact cause of the condition; this will then enable you to be more directed in your treatment, speeding up your recovery.

Useful tips for managing your symptoms at home include:

- ❖ Applying ice to your heel for 20 minutes – checking regularly to make sure the skin isn't burning
- ❖ Rolling your foot over a tin can/frozen bottle of water
- ❖ Stretching the Plantar Fascia
- ❖ Wearing cushioned shoes
- ❖ Modifying your exercise routine to reduce stresses through the foot



PF then, is a common problem, but also a very fixable problem. Get assessed to see what you need to do, and you'll be back on track sooner than you think!

Sam Downer BSc MCSP