

Plantar heel pain

(also called plantar fasciitis or plantar fasciopathy)

Telephone: 0300 124 5855

Use the QR code to see our team's website page.



What is plantar heel pain?

Plantar heel pain is pain under the heel of the foot. It is usually caused by irritation of the plantar fascia, a strong band of tissue that supports the arch of the foot. The plantar fascia stretches every time you walk and can become painful if overloaded.

What are the symptoms?

Pain is usually felt under the heel, often in one specific tender area. It is typically worse with the first few steps in the morning, after sitting for a period of time, or following prolonged walking or standing.

What causes it?

Common causes include a sudden increase in activity, spending long periods on your feet, hard surfaces, unsupportive footwear, tight calf muscles and carrying excess body weight. Around one in ten people will experience plantar heel pain at some point.

Will it get better?

Yes. Most cases improve with time and self-management, although recovery can take several months and sometimes up to 12–18 months.

Managing your heel pain

Stay as active as possible but try to reduce activities that significantly increase your pain. Some discomfort is normal, but symptoms should settle after activity and not remain much worse the following day.

Supportive, cushioned footwear is important. Avoid thin-soled, flat or unsupportive shoes where possible. Gel heel cups or cushioned insoles may improve comfort for some people.

Pacing your activity can help. Build up walking, exercise and time on your feet gradually rather than making sudden increases. Ice wrapped in a towel for up to 10 minutes may also provide temporary pain relief.

If appropriate, maintaining a healthy weight can reduce the load on the plantar fascia.

Exercises

Exercises are one of the most effective treatments. Regular stretching and strengthening can improve flexibility, reduce pain and increase the ability of the plantar fascia to cope with daily activities.

Recommended exercises include:

- Plantar fascia massage
- Calf stretches
- Plantar fascia stretches
- Calf raises

Further exercise guidance can be found on the [My Joint Health Hub website](#).

Other treatments

Taping, heel cups and insoles can reduce strain on the plantar fascia and may be helpful alongside exercise. Night splints keep the foot gently stretched while sleeping and can help some people, particularly if morning pain is severe.

Shockwave therapy may improve symptoms in some cases when combined with exercise. Please note that this treatment is not currently NHS-funded in BNSSG and is usually available privately.

Steroid injections are not generally recommended as a first-line treatment. Although they may provide short-term pain relief, they carry a small risk of weakening or damaging the plantar fascia.

Key message

Most plantar heel pain improves with time, regular exercise, supportive footwear and gradual activity progression. Recovery can be slow, but the condition usually gets better without surgery.

Further information

- [My Joint Health Hub](#):
- [Footwear advice](#):
- [NHS Heel Pain](#):

Other formats

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