

Plantar Fasciitis

What is plantar fasciitis and why does it develop? Plantar fasciitis is a very common kind of tendonitis, but instead of a tendon, it's the plantar fascia of the foot that's inflamed. The plantar fascia is a sheet of connective tissue that stretches from the heel to toes, spanning the arch of the foot. It is basically an inflammation and thickening of the plantar fascia caused by chronic irritation of the arch of the foot due to excessive strain.

Muscle knots, technically known as myofascial trigger points (MTPs), are a factor in almost all cases. A trigger point is a section of super-contracted and irritated muscle tissue, and it can cause symptoms ranging from mild stiffness to extreme pain. They not only cause pain and problems directly, but also develop in response to other biomechanical problems (spinal misalignments).

Manual Therapy

Trigger points and myofascial adhesions are primary culprits in unresolved plantar fasciitis. You will notice most of these muscles are far-removed from the symptomatic area. So why work them? To remove kinetic chain biomechanical compensation patterns. If affected, these areas will be tender and painful. It takes at least six to 10 half-hour sessions for most MTPs to resolve. Primary muscles include (for your massage therapist): iliopsoas, quadratus lumborum, gluteus medius/minimus, tensor fascia latae, iliotibial band, adductor longus/magnus, vastus medialis obliquus, tibialis anterior, posterior tibialis, flexor digitorum longus, soleus and intrinsic foot muscles.

Night Splints

Night splints may be extremely effective in treating plantar fasciitis, including stubborn cases. They are evidence-based, cheap, easy and effective for the great majority of patients. They are so good that for many people, it can be the secret component to lasting relief. They are usually available at most medical supply stores or google "plantar fasciitis foot splint", you'll get many hits. Most splints come with instructions, but the basic splint will hold your foot at a 90-degree angle to your shin. Several nights of usage may be required before a difference is noticed.

Home Care

Apply trigger-point therapy and myofascial release at home by using tennis balls, baseballs, and golf balls. Put the balls or objects under the area and roll back and forth, then ice the heel or point of pain for 5-10 minutes, 15 minutes max. Primary areas include the plantar surface of the foot, calf and buttock regions. The key is to do the therapy three to five times per day for 60 seconds on each area of the foot. Remember that it's about frequency, not duration.

Lifestyle

Activities of daily living must be mentioned here which include proper shoes, exercise, work habits, ergonomics, etc. Tennis shoes are recommended at all times until your condition resolves, no barefoot walking, flats, sandals around the house, work or play for the first 2-4 weeks. Despite the best care program, maximum results will not occur if you continue to irritate the condition. You will need to make genuine effort and certain sacrifices to recover.