



Patient education: Heel pain caused by plantar fasciitis (The Basics)

[Written by the doctors and editors at UpToDate](#)

What causes heel pain?

One of the most common causes of heel pain is a problem called "plantar fasciitis." Plantar fasciitis is the term doctors use when a part of the foot called the plantar fascia gets irritated. The plantar fascia is a tough band of tissue that connects the heel bone to the toes ([figure 1](#)).

Heel pain caused by plantar fasciitis is very common. It often affects people who run, jump, or stand for long periods. Most people who get this type of heel pain get better within a year even if they do not get treated.

What are the symptoms of plantar fasciitis?

The most common symptom is pain under the heel and sole (bottom) of the foot. The pain is often worst when you first get out of bed in the morning. It can also be bad when you get up after being seated for some time.

Is there anything I can do on my own to feel better?

Yes, you can:

- **Rest** – Give your foot a chance to heal by resting. But don't completely stop being active. Doing that can lead to more pain and stiffness in the long run.
- **Ice your foot** – Putting ice on your heel for 20 minutes up to 4 times a day might relieve pain. Icing and massaging your foot before exercise might also help.

- **Do special foot exercises** – Certain exercises can help with heel pain. Do these exercises every day ([figure 2](#)).
 - **Take pain medicines** – If your pain is severe, you can try taking pain medicines that you can get without a prescription. Examples include [ibuprofen](#) (sample brand names: Advil, Motrin) and [naproxen](#) (sample brand name: Aleve). But if you have other medical conditions or already take other medicines, ask your doctor or nurse before taking new pain medicines.
 - **Wear sturdy shoes** – Sneakers with a lot of cushion and good arch and heel support are best. Shoes with rigid soles can also help. Adding padded or gel heel inserts to your shoes might help, too.
 - **Wear splints at night** – Some people feel better if they wear a splint while they sleep that keeps their foot straight. These splints are sold in drugstores and medical supply stores.
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Is there a test for plantar fasciitis?

No, there is no test. But your doctor or nurse should be able to tell if you have it by learning about your symptoms and doing an exam. He or she might suggest an X-ray, or other tests to check whether your symptoms might be caused by something else.

How is plantar fasciitis treated?

The first step is to try the things you can do on your own. But if you do not get better, or your symptoms are severe, your doctor or nurse might suggest:

- Taping up your foot in a special way that helps the support the foot ([picture 1](#))
- Special shoe inserts, made to fit your foot
- Shots (that go into your foot) of a medicine called a steroid, which can help with the pain
- Putting a splint over your foot and ankle
- Surgery (this is an option only in some cases that do not get better with other treatments)

Some doctors also suggest a treatment called "shock wave therapy." This treatment is painful and has not been proven to work.

Is there anything I can do to keep from getting heel pain again?

Yes. To reduce the chances that your pain will come back:

- Wear shoes that fit well, have a lot of cushion, and support the heel and ankle
 - Avoid wearing slippers, flip-flops, slip-ons, or poorly fitted shoes
 - Avoid going barefoot
 - Do not wear worn-out shoes
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More on this topic

[Patient education: Heel and foot pain \(caused by plantar fasciitis\) \(Beyond the Basics\)](#)

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GRAPHICS

Plantar fasciitis



The plantar fascia is a tough band of tissue that connects the heel bone to the toes.

Graphic 73704 Version 8.0

Exercises that can help with heel pain



Sit with your legs straight and loop a towel around your foot. Then pull the top part of your foot towards you. Hold it like that for 10 to 30 seconds. Repeat this 5 times each session and do 2 sessions a day. You can also push the ball of your foot against the towel. This exercises and strengthens the muscles in your foot.



With your leg resting against something and your foot in the air, point and flex your foot. Then make circles with your foot by rotating your ankle.

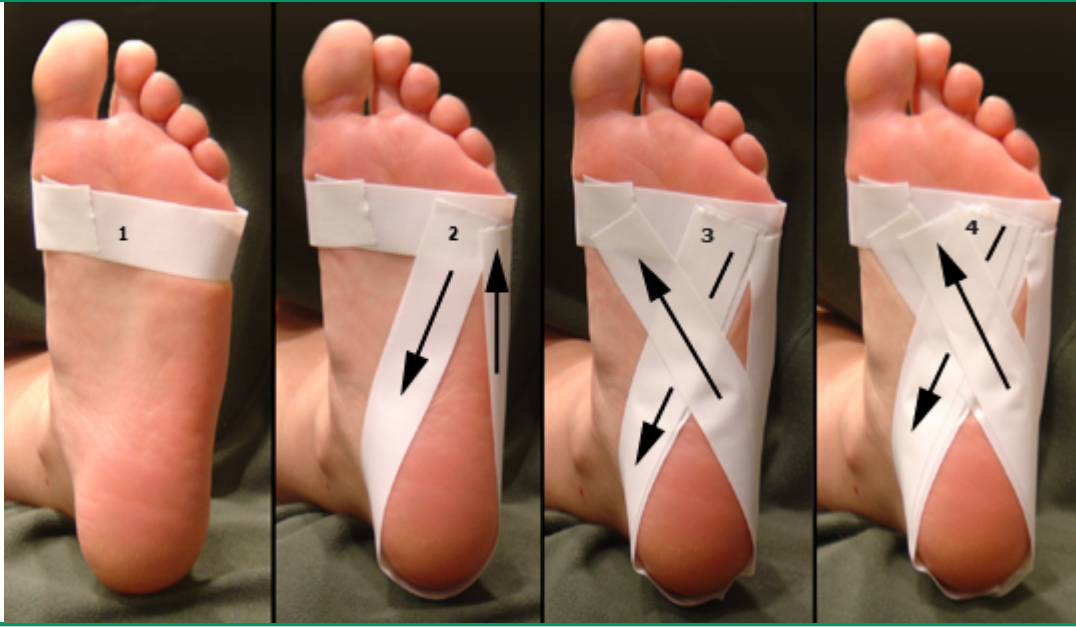


Curl your toes around the edge of a book. Then straighten them. Do this over and over again for 2 minutes, twice a day.



Curl your toes around a towel. Then grip and release the towel over and over again for 1 to 2 minutes, twice a day.

Foot taping for plantar fasciitis



This way of taping the foot sometimes helps with plantar fasciitis. You can use sports tape, available at drug stores, for this. Here are the steps involved, from left to right.

- (1) Wrap a strip of tape around the foot, at the level of the ball of the foot.
- (2) Wrap a second strip of tape around the heel, starting just below the pinky toe, around the sides of the heel, and back up to the first strip of tape.
- (3) Wrap a third strip of tape around the heel, starting just below the pinky toe, like you did in step 2. This time, circle the heel and wrap the tape in a criss-cross, so that it ends just below the big toe.
- (4) Repeat step 3. The tape does not need to align perfectly. The tape can stay in place for 1 week.