

Help! My Heel Hurts



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Plantar fasciitis is the most common cause of heel pain. Plantar fasciitis, also known as “heel spur syndrome”, is an inflammatory condition of the plantar fascia, a thick, fibrous band of tissue which originates from the calcaneus (heel bone) and inserts into the forefoot. The plantar fascia supports the arch and is placed under tension when a person stands, walks or runs. Continuous tension or strain on the fascia may lead to repetitive microtrauma or small tears in the fascia. This microtrauma results in an inflammatory response and pain. A heel spur may also develop in association with fasciitis. The spur is typically not the cause of pain, but rather secondary to the tension of muscle and ligament and inflammatory response.

Symptoms usually occur over time and begin as dull pain which can become sharp and persistent. The pain is usually worse in the morning upon the first few steps out of bed, or when standing up after sitting for a period of time. Typically, the pain occurs in the heel, however, it may also be present in the arch area or close to the ball of the foot. Pain may also be associated with standing for long periods of time, impact activities, or running. Plantar fasciitis may be seen in certain foot types, (high or low arch), patients with faulty foot mechanics,

poor shoe gear, running or standing surface, change in workout, overuse, and obesity.

Treatment for plantar fasciitis, consists of rest, activity modification, no barefoot walking, immobilization, icing, stretching, use of anti-inflammatory medication, steroid injection, arch supports/orthotics, physical therapy, night splints, shockwave therapy, or surgery. Treatment may take a significant period of time. However, most plantar fasciitis may be resolved with conservative treatment and patient compliance.

Initial treatment usually consists of imaging. At Foot and Ankle Specialists, we can perform state-of-the-art imaging, including in office digital x-ray and diagnostic ultrasound. We offer biomechanical and gait analysis, and provide custom molded functional orthotics, which can be utilized in dress shoes, as well as athletic shoe gear. In addition, the latest treatment options, including extracorporeal pulse activation, “shockwave” treatment and platelet injection therapy may be utilized. These modalities utilize non-invasive technology to “jumpstart” the body’s healing response. If a surgical option is necessary, our board certified physicians are trained in minimally invasive endoscopic plantar fasciotomy procedures as well.

Doctor Jason M. Levy is board certified by the American Board of Podiatric Surgery in foot and reconstructive rearfoot/ankle surgery. He is a Fellow of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons and the American Society of Podiatric Surgeons. He is the current chief of podiatric surgery at Morton Plant/Mease Hospitals and is a clinical faculty member of the USF-MPM Family Medicine Residency Program. He is currently practicing in our Clearwater and Bardmoor offices.

Dr. Levy’s areas of expertise includes, reconstructive forefoot, rearfoot, and ankle surgery, foot and ankle trauma, lower extremity wound care, diabetic limb salvage, and sports medicine. He regularly treats a variety of athletes for foot and ankle ailments.

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