

# TRAINING TIP #19

## HEEL PAIN: PLANTAR FASCIITIS

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**“Whenever I put pressure down on my heel, I get a severe, sharp pain under my heel.”**

**“It’s like the bottom of my heel is bruised.”**

**“My feet hurt so much in the morning I have to walk on my tiptoes.”**

**“My flat feet never bothered me until I started to increase my walking.”**

If these are your symptoms you may have developed **plantar fasciitis**.

### **What is plantar fasciitis?**

Plantar fasciitis is a painful inflammation of a ligament between the ball of the foot and the heel. It can occur from:

1. Increased walking (especially on asphalt or concrete).
2. Prolonged standing.
3. Gaining weight.
4. Poorly fitted shoes.

The pain occurs because you are stretching the plantar fascia. The pain usually lessens with more walking, but it may occur again after periods of rest. Walkers may get plantar fasciitis when they change their workout and increase their mileage and frequency of workouts. It also can occur with a change in exercise surface or terrain, or if your shoes are worn out and don’t provide enough cushion for your heels. If the arches of your feet are abnormally high or low, you are more likely to develop plantar fasciitis than if your arches are normal.

### **How is it treated?**

1. Give your painful heels lots of rest. You may need to stay completely off your feet for several days when the pain is severe.
2. Anti-inflammatory medications, such as ibuprofen for 7 days, may help (DO NOT take more than the recommended dose).
3. Roll a frozen water bottle over the sole of your foot for 5 minutes, 2 to 3 times a day.
4. Try to cushion your foot. Wear comfortable, supportive athletic shoes, even at work, for a while. Cushion the heel with heel cups or insoles. They are most helpful if you are overweight or elderly. Wear an over-the-counter full-length orthotic sole support (e.g., Spenco or Superfeet). These can be particularly helpful if you have flat feet or high arches.
5. Most importantly, start Achilles tendon stretches as demonstrated below. Stretch, stretch, stretch. (See below). If the pain persists despite this treatment, seek medical advice.

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