

# Plantar heel pain

Allied Healthcare Professionals (AHP)

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.



# Introduction

This leaflet is designed for people with plantar heel pain (pain under the heel) to help provide some understanding of the problem you are experiencing and offer advice on how you can manage it. The advice in this leaflet should be followed in conjunction with any information that has been provided by your orthotist. If you are unsure about any of the information provided in this leaflet, please speak with your orthotist.

## What is plantar heel pain?

One of the most common causes of heel pain is irritation to the plantar fascia. The plantar fascia is a band of soft tissue which runs along the sole of the foot, from the heel to the base of the toes. It assists in supporting and stabilising the arch of the foot. If over-loaded, this can become thickened and painful, usually where it attaches to the bottom of the heel bone. This pain is typically worse during the first steps in the morning, or after periods of rest.

## What are the possible risk factors?

- Being overweight
- Long periods of standing or walking
- Sudden increases in activity level (such as exercise or a new job that involves more standing or walking)
- Inappropriate footwear, such as those with very hard, flat soles
- Tightness in the calf muscles
- Weakness in the muscles of the lower leg, ankle and foot
- Very high or low medial arches can be a factor, but not always

## What can you do to help your pain?

- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Opt for footwear with cushioned heels that can provide shock absorption
- Avoid footwear with flat, hard soles
- Follow the advice in this leaflet and have patience – most cases will resolve within 12 months with conservative management

- Try over the counter gel heel cups. These can be found in most chemists and supermarkets

## What exercises can you do for plantar heel pain?

The exercises outlined below are designed to help strengthen the small muscles of the sole of the feet. These muscles work together with the plantar fascia to help support the arch and control the stresses on the foot when walking. There is also advice provided on stretching a tight plantar fascia and calf muscles.

### Strengthening exercises

#### Exercise 1 – Towel pickup

Sit on a chair with a towel on the floor, beneath your foot.

With your heel on the floor, pick up the towel with your foot by scrunching your toes, hold for 3 seconds, then put the towel down again.

Repeat this 10 times on each affected foot, 3 times per day.



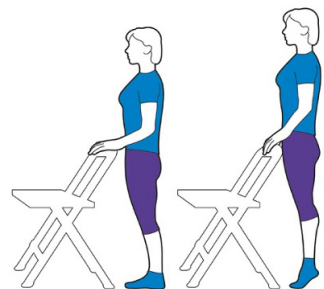
#### Exercise 2 – Single leg heel raises

On a staircase, roll up a small hand-towel and place it on the bottom step. Stand on the edge of the step, with only your toes on the rolled-up towel, so that your toes are bent upwards.

This should be performed in stages. 3 seconds to go up on your toes, hold for 2 seconds at the top, then slowly go back down for 3 seconds.

If you cannot do this on one leg, start with two legs until you are strong enough to do it on one leg.

Repeat this 12 times, 3 times over (36 in total).



# Stretching exercises

## Exercise 1 – Arch stretch

Sitting on a chair, cross one leg over the other and put your fingers over the base of your toes. Pull your toes back towards your shin until you can feel a stretch in the arch or plantar fascia. Use your other hand to feel for the plantar fascia to ensure you feel a stretch. Hold for 30 seconds

Repeat this 10 times, 3 times per day.



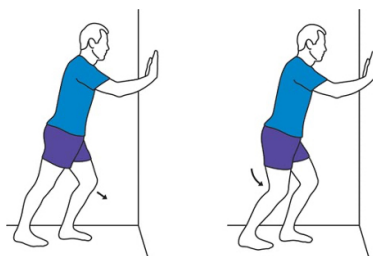
## Exercise 2 – Towel stretch

Sitting with your leg outstretched in front of you, wrap a towel around the ball of your foot and pull your foot towards you. Keep your knee straight as you do this. You should feel a stretch in your calf. Hold for 30 seconds and repeat 10 times.



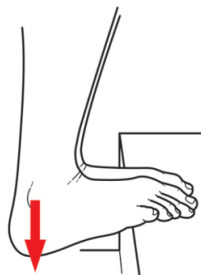
## Exercise 3 – Standing calf stretch

1. Place your hands on a wall and stand with one leg behind the other, keeping your knee straight and heel on the floor. Lean forward, bending the front knee. You should feel a stretch in your calf and achilles tendon. Hold for 30 seconds and repeat 10 times
2. Do this again, but this time with the back knee slightly bent.



### Exercise 4 – Heel drop stretch

With your knees straight, stand with your toes on the edge of a step and allow your heels to drop down off the step until you feel a stretch in your calf and achilles tendons. Hold for 30 seconds and repeat 10 times.



## Contact Details

### **Orthotics Department**

New Cross Hospital  
Wednesfield Road  
Wolverhampton  
WV10 0QP

Tel: 01902 694082

### **Orthotics Department**

Cannock Chase Hospital  
Assessment Unit, Level 2  
Brunswick Road  
WS11 5XY

Tel: 01543 576626 / 6130

The department opening times are 8:30am to 4:30pm

Reception phones are answered between 9:00am to 4:00pm

Email: [rwh-tr.orthoticservice@nhs.net](mailto:rwh-tr.orthoticservice@nhs.net)



## English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

## Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

## Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

## Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

## Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

## Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。