Heel Pain

Center for Health Promotion

1. Rest
2. Good shoe wear
3. Additional arch support
4. Stretching
5. Ice
6. Anti-inflammatory medication
7. Don't go barefoot

As a last resort, surgery may be required. The following treatments may be pre-existing exercises and stretches if needed with good quality footwear. Stretching may be significantly improved or resolved by significant periods. Most heel pain can be resolved and can result in a pain-free foot. This suggests the problem is always relieving pressure on the plantar fascia. Partial condition is involved sufficiently that surgery may be considered as a last resort to your problem.

1. Orthotic
2. Custom insoles
3. Running or swimming for walking or jogging.
4. Modifying activities to substitute with.

Occasionally this condition cannot be completely resolved and you will still have occasional heel pain. For chronic heel pain, sometimes surgery may be considered as a last resort to your problem.
The most common cause of heel pain is a condition called plantar fascitis. This may or may not be associated with a heel spur. The discomfort is usually at the bottom of the heel but can extend into the arch area or around the borders of the heel. It is very commonly described as a bruise or sharp pain, worse when getting up in the morning or after being off the feet for a while. It may also be aggravated by activity, standing for long periods of time, and poor shoe wear.

Even though the discomfort is in the heel area, it should be thought of as an arch problem. There is a thick band of tissue that stretches from the toes, across the arch, and attaches on the bottom of the heel bone. This structure is called the plantar fascia. Whenever you are on your feet, the plantar fascia is under tension similar to a bowstring. The pain occurs due to inflammation at the attachment area between the plantar fascia and heel bone. This can be a result of increased activity, poor shoe wear, improper foot function, aging, excessive weight, or other associated medical conditions such as arthritis.

**Treatment**

Treatment should start with rest or decreased activity. Make sure you are wearing quality footwear with good arch support and cushioning, especially if you are going to be active or on your feet for any extended period of time. Add arch support and cushioning to your shoes as needed. Spenco arch supports are a good product for this problem and can be obtained at sporting goods or running shoe stores.

**Stretching exercise**

Tight muscles in the back of your legs (calf muscles) can contribute to this problem and stretching these muscles by the following techniques will help significantly.

*Before arising* — Each morning, while still lying in bed, stretch the foot that has heel pain by reaching out first with the heel, then the toe. Repeat slowly for 5 minutes. Alternate passive stretching (using a towel or band of rubber to pull the foot) with active stretching (using your muscles).

*During the day* — Place hands on a wall and feet flat on the floor. Move your involved foot back a step, turning the toes in slightly. Keep the forward (uninvolved) knee “soft” (barely bent). Tuck buttocks underneath the torso, tilting the pelvis toward the wall. Do not arch your back.

Continue to move the painful leg back.

Feel the stretch for 1 or 2 minutes, then bend the uninvolved knee further to increase the stretch, and hold another 1 or 2 minutes. Repeat this exercise twice a day, 10 minutes each time.

*Note: Keep the stretches slow, and don’t bounce.*

If you are overweight, weight loss will also help reduce symptoms along with ice, massage and elevation. Your care provider may also use oral anti-inflammatory medication or a local cortisone injection to help relieve the inflammation and discomfort.