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Plantar Fasciitis

Plantar fasciitis is a common and often very painful ailment that can affect any individual. It typically manifests as pain along the inside of the heel and base of the arch that is worse when first standing in the morning or after prolonged sitting. It occurs when a band of tissue called fascia becomes tight and causes excessive stress and secondary inflammation at the insertion on the heel. Although some blame bone spurs as the cause of this pain, both spurs and plantar fasciitis may occur together or exclusive of one another. Given the severity of pain it is easy to think a sharp spur may be causing this pain. However, conservative treatments short of spur removal usually result in improvement or resolution of symptoms and therefore disprove this as the primary source of pain.

Conservative treatment is focused at stretching the plantar fascia, or the tight band that comprises the arch on the bottom of the foot. It is important to do this at least daily for several weeks to maximize the benefit or symptoms may return. Fortunately, it only takes a couple of minutes to do. Stretching of the calves also provides the benefit of removing stress from the mid and forefoot by preserving the normal gait pattern of walking heel to toe.

As with most inflammatory conditions, ice, and appropriately prescribed anti-inflammatory medicine can also decrease pain. A useful trick to icing the foot is to freeze water half-filled in a paper Dixie cup. By then removing the paper from the bottom of the cup, it allows one to use the cup as a handle to massage the plantar fascia and heel with the ice.

We have assembled a series of stretches which have proven clinical benefits in treating plantar fasciitis. Please visit our Physical Therapy tab at our website www.floridajointcare.com to view our instructional videos created by our surgeons and therapists to correctly perform these stretches at home.

Home Exercise Program

1. Plantar fascia stretch – hold for 30 seconds, perform twice daily
 2. Calf stretch (gastrocnemius) – hold for 30 seconds, perform twice daily
 3. Calf stretch (soleus) – hold for 30 seconds, perform twice daily
- * May adjust number of repetitions and number of sets as tolerated.

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