

# Orthopaedic Connection

## Foot Misery

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### *Transforming patient information into patient understanding.*

One day your foot is fine. Never had any trouble with it. Then you begin to have some soreness in the foot usually to the medial or inner side of the heel. You try to think what you did to cause it, but finally you decide there is no cause you can think of. Rats! Now what? Pain seems to be getting worse and you start to limp. Family and co-workers begin to notice.

Welcome to the mysterious world of heel pain or medically known as plantar fasciitis (don't try to pronounce it!)

### **What is it?**

Plantar fascia is a normal thick band of fibrous tissue on the bottom of your foot. It goes from the toes to the heel. Think of plantar fascia like a bow string that supports the sole of your foot arch and keeps the foot from collapsing.

This plantar fascia begins to get sore and inflamed usually where the band attaches to the heel bone on the sole of the foot.

Too much tension on the fascia causes overload of the tissue. It is thought that tiny microscopic tears appear in the tissue causing inflammation and pain where the arch of your foot meets the heel.

### **The Tell Tale Symptom**

Waking up in the morning with pain in the bottom of the heel. In the beginning it is pain that subsides a little once you start moving around. The pain can also occur after sitting for a while or riding in a car. You get up and start to walk and ouch.

### **Causes of Plantar Fasciitis**

The causes are many and probably more than one cause, that is a combination of causes is present in each person who develops it.

The possible causes in no particular order are:

- Losing some flexibility of fascia with age
- Fat pad on bottom of heel becomes thinner
- Going barefoot too much
- Wearing shoes or slippers without much padding or arch support
- Overweight
- Excessive walking
- Abnormal foot structure like high arches or flat feet
- Abnormal walking pattern which increases strain on the fascia

### **Plantar Fasciitis and Heel Spur**

There is no direct connection between plantar fasciitis and heel spurs. It is very hard to convince patients of this. People can have heel spurs and no pain. It is not the heel spur that causes the pain. It is the inflammation in the plantar fascia.

### **Why is it Worse in the Morning?**

It is thought that the plantar fascia tightens up over night. When we are resting the foot automatically points downward and is not at a 90 degree angle. When you begin to move around you begin to stretch it and pain occurs.

### **What is the Best Treatment? Will I Need Surgery?**

I'm out of space this week. I wanted to make sure you had a good understanding of the condition itself. I will finish next time covering all aspects of treatment. See you then.

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