

Orthopaedic Connection

Pain In The Heel

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Anyone who has never had pain in their heel, raise your hand. Well, there are a few hands, but not many. It is really common and I see many people in my office with it. It doesn't seem related to age as I see heel pain in all adult age groups.

Cause

There is a thick band of tissue in your foot that stretches from the ball to the heel. It is called the plantar fascia. It is thought that small tears occur in the fascia where it attaches to the heel bone. This tearing results in inflammation in the area which can cause intense pain.

Diagnosis – The Ice Pick

Almost the hallmark of plantar fasciitis is that it hurts in the morning with the first few steps. As you move around it calms down and then hurts later in the day.

Many patients say it is as if an ice pick is poking the center of the heel.

It also occurs as start up pain after sitting for awhile then you get up to walk and “OUCH”.

Some Causes

In most people it just happens. You're more likely to have it if you have

- Excessive weight
- Diabetes
- High arches or flat feet
- To stand a lot on a hard surface

What Else Could It Be?

Heel pain like this can come from a stress fracture. This almost always occurs in those who walk excessively or over train athletically.

Older people who have osteopenia (low bone mass) can develop stress fractures.

A heel spur may be present with the inflammation and pain. But lots of people with spurs have no pain. It gets confusing!

Treatment

1. First line treatment is;
 - Ice it
 - A soft spongy heel cup or a gel pad in the shoe
 - Shoes that give good support (not flip-flops!)
 - Ibuprofen or similar
 - A night splint to keep the achilles tendon stretched
2. Inject heel with steroid and ultrasound guidance in the office
3. Go to physical therapy

4. It can take 3 – 6 months to resolve
5. You probably don't need \$300-400 custom orthotics
6. Less than 5% of the time I need to do surgery
7. Losing weight can help
8. Platelet-rich plasma injections are rarely done, but your insurance won't pay for it

You can try some things on your own, but if they don't help I have some other things on the menu which I note above.

My patients put their trust in me and what I do improves the quality of their lives.

Gratiot County Herald Archive and Office Website.

I sincerely appreciate all of you loyal readers and patients present and future and welcome all newcomers!

Besides what you read today there is a huge treasure trove of Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal information at www.orthopodsurgeon.com. It contains the Website Library, Your Orthopaedic Connection and complete archive of every GCH article I have written.

I specialize in you. Be well.

Dr. Haverbush