

Argus Orthopaedic Zone

Heel Pain, Ouch!

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Anyone who has not had some foot pain at one time or another please raise your foot, uh, I mean raise your hand, sorry. I thought so, only two hands are raised. It comes from a wide variety of causes, but it is miserable because you can't get away from it. It is there with most every step.

I can't cover all the reasons for foot pain today, but I do plan to cover one of the most common ones. Heel pain.

Mostly it comes for no apparent reason.

Stone Bruise

If there is a reason that you know, it may be from stepping down hard on an object such as a rock. Patients always call this a stone bruise. Maybe there is discoloration from the injury. Maybe there is none. If this is what caused your heel pain you are lucky. Why? Because if you rest the heel, the pain will gradually go away in several days.

Plantar Fasciitis

This is a very common cause of heel pain. You didn't step on a rock; you didn't do a darn thing, but now your heel hurts. Say hi to "plantar fasciitis". It is the most common cause of foot pain affecting millions of people each year. Standing or walking is difficult because your heel hurts.

You'll notice it especially when you get out of bed and when you stand up after sitting for long periods.

What It Is

What's happened is that the fascia, a very tough band of tissue that connects your heel bone (calcaneus) to the base of your toes has for some reason become inflamed.

It is most common in:

- Joggers
- Exercise walkers
- People with tight calf muscles limiting ankle flexion - extension
- Over weight
- Women more than men

Symptoms

It begins with mild pain under the heel bone. Often you will feel the pain after you exercise, not during it. The pain can gradually worsen over days. Some people even have it at rest not just with

weight bearing. The pain centers on the very bottom of the heel, usually to the inner side.

Good News, Bad News

Good: 95% plus of people with this condition get rid of it without surgery.

Bad: it may take 6 months or more to get rid of it.

Heel Spur

It looks like a bony projection from the heel on the under (plantar) side of the heel. It can't be felt, but is easy to see on x-ray.

Orthopaedic Surgeons know that as impressive as it can look on x-ray, it isn't the source of the pain. Why? Because people usually have the pain in one heel, not both. If I take an x-ray of the opposite good foot, I almost always see the same spur on the foot that doesn't hurt.

Doesn't Make Sense

I know it doesn't make sense, but that is the way it is. It means that the spur itself is not the cause of your pain. Can't be. The good foot doesn't hurt. It has never hurt, but there is a big spur just like the painful foot.

Dang. Out of time again and I haven't even touched on treatment. Please come back and I will tell you what works best for me to make you better.

Office Website and Argus Orthopaedic Archive

For a tremendous amount of musculoskeletal and Orthopaedic surgery information check out the office website www.orthopodsurgeon.com which also takes you to Your Orthopaedic Connection. It contains a huge amount of Orthopaedic and musculoskeletal information.

In addition, the website has the archive of every article I have written for you in Shepherd Argus. All the articles are listed from most recent back to the first one! Check it out for interesting articles you may have missed.

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

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush