

# Argus Orthopaedic Zone

## Help For Painful Heel

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

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

Last time I tried to give you a good overview of the painful heel which is a very common problem I see in the office. Hopefully you have a good understanding about what it is.

#### **Treatment**

- Heel Cord Stretch

The key to treatment is performing exercises that stretch the Achilles tendon and the plantar fascia on the sole of the foot.

Stand 3 feet from the wall with feet pointed straight ahead. Lean into the wall holding your hands against the wall. Don't raise your heels off the floor. Hold for 5 seconds. Repeat 5 times. Do this several times per day.

- Take Advil or similar anti-inflammatory pain medication.
- Wear shoes with shock absorbing soles.
- Put soft, sponge heel pads in your shoes.
- Do this for 6 weeks. If no improvement - read on.

#### **Splinting**

One of the components of heel pain is tightness in the tough fibrous tissue in the sole of the foot called fascia.

Overnight when we sleep our feet and ankles relax and are pointed down. The fascia tightens and pain occurs in the morning. There are splints available that hold the foot and ankle at a right angle while you sleep, not allowing the fascia to tighten.

#### **Physical Therapy**

I occasionally order physical therapy to treat a painful heel. This can do wonders in relieving pain and stiffness. Ultrasound and other means may be used in addition to stretching exercises to relieve the inflammation and tightness.

#### **Injection**

In stubborn cases I sometimes do an injection of a steroid and local anesthetic into the painful, inflamed source. It is done from the side of the foot and I try to anesthetize the skin on the side of the heel before injecting.

#### **Surgery**

I don't need to do surgery for this foot condition very often. It is sometimes needed if all else fails. The painful fascia

attachment is released from the heel and if present the bone spur is removed at the same time. Partial weight bearing in a bulky bandage and special shoe is needed for 10 - 14 days. Then sutures come out and protected weight bearing is needed for a few weeks to allow pain and swelling to decrease. It can take 2 - 3 months to fully recover.

### **What Else?**

Without treatment your walking gait may change and cause symptoms in your knee, hip and back. So it is not a good idea to put off treatment if you have significant symptoms of heel pain. It's miserable, but there is treatment if you need it. Good luck.

### **Office Website and Argus Orthopaedic Archive**

For a tremendous amount of musculoskeletal and Orthopaedic surgery information check out the office website [www.orthopodsurgeon.com](http://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