Orthopaedic Connection

What The Heck Is Plantar Fasciitis?

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*Transforming patient information into patient understanding.*

Plantar fasciitis is doctor talk for sore heel. I always attempt to use terms my patients can understand as most of you know. While you may not have known the condition by its medical name it is the most common cause of heel pain.

Anatomy

Plantar refers to the sole of the foot. The fascia ligament runs along the bottom of the foot from the heel bone to the toes.

Stress on the plantar fascia can cause small tears where the fascia attaches to the heel bone. This causes inflammation and resultant heel pain.

Why Pain in the AM and After Sitting?

The plantar fascia tightens when your foot relaxes and points down.

Cause

There is often not a clear cause or triggering event. Some known factors:

- Excessive weight
- Tight calf muscles
- High arches
- Running (repeated impact)
- Dancing, frequent jumping
- More likely to have it if you are female

Symptoms

Pain directly in the plantar part of the heel. It may be felt also in the arch. The pain is usually most noticeable when first standing up especially in the morning. It may come on after walking, running or prolonged standing. It often decreases after light activity. It can affect one or both feet.

Evaluation

A careful examination of the foot reveals tenderness in the bottom of the heel. It’s important to note the overall structure of the foot: high arch, flatfoot, etc.

I evaluate how the foot and ankle joints move. Circulation and sensation are noted. Often when I see patients with the condition x-rays have not been taken, but they are needed. Why? Because it is important to know if there is a heel spur, crack in the bone or arthritis in joints of the foot.

A Word About Heel Spurs

Heel spurs are mysterious. People with a sore heel may have a heel spur on x-ray, but not always.

Lots of people with big heel spurs may have no foot pain. People with no spur on x-ray can have really bad heel pain. It makes no sense, but it is true.
There is a lot more to cover so I will finish with Plantar Fasciitis next week. See you then.

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

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

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush