

Heel Pain & Stretching Exercises

West Coast Podiatry Center
Medical and Surgical Management of the Lower Extremity



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Ways to Avoid Heel Pain

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Heel pain, if detected early, can usually be treated with conservative options. However, the longer you wait to have heel pain addressed by a podiatrist, the more difficulties it is to successfully treat.

Looking for the best easy to avoid heel pain altogether? Consider the following:

ALWAYS

- Wear supportive shoes
- Avoid walking barefoot
- Stretch your feet well prior to getting up in the morning and before exercising
- Ice your heel if pain is felt (If you have diabetes, double check with your doctor if icing is appropriate)



Common Causes of Heel Pain

The number one cause of heel pain is the condition called plantar fasciitis. It is often characterized by pain on the bottom of the heel when you take your first steps in the morning, but can also last all day long - with pain often progressing the longer the condition remains untreated. In addition, other common causes of the heel pain include tendonitis, stress fractures, neuritis, bursitis, tarsal tunnel syndrome, arthritis, and fat pad thinning.

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What can cause plantar fasciitis specifically?

Plantar fasciitis can be caused by a number of factors including weight gain, worn out shoes, walking barefoot, increased exercise, and walking on the surfaces without proper support. Any of these factors, in combination with how your feet function mechanically, can cause plantar fasciitis.

Stretching



How to Stretch

- Never stretch to the point of pain
- Do no bounce or use quick movements
- Hold each stretch for 20-30 seconds
- Perform each stretch, one set 3 times

Routine stretching is very important to healing plantar fasciitis. Most of the affected by plantar fasciitis have decreased flexibility and tight Achilles Tendons.

DO NOT STRETCH THROUGH PAIN.

None of these stretches should be painful

Arch Stretch

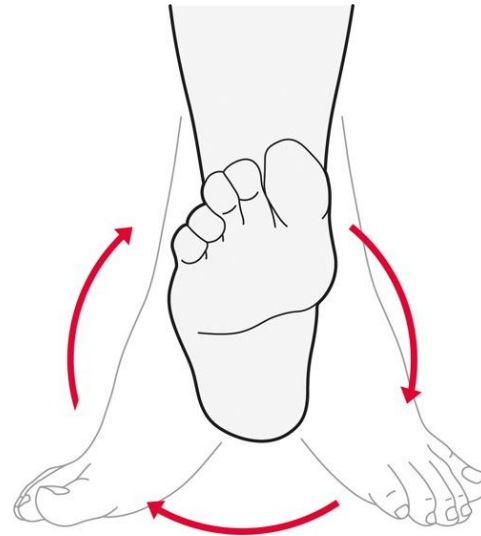
- Cross ankle over the knee
- Grab base of toes and the ball of foot
- Pull toward the shin until feeling a stretch in the arch ligament, or plantar fascia.
- Switch sides and repeat





Circle

- With the big toe leading the foot, make large circles clockwise 4 times, then counterclockwise
- Write out imaginary letters in the air using your big toe. Capital A, B, C, etc.
- Switch sides and repeat





Belt/Towel Stretch

- Loop a towel or belt around the ball of the foot
- Slowly pull the foot and toes towards the knee, keeping your body straight
- This is the passive stretch, meaning the top of the foot and ankle are relaxed, your hands are pulling the belt or towel, which is doing the work to stretch the back of the ankle.
- Switch sides and repeat

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Calf/Achilles Stretch

- Stand facing a wall, place your hands on the wall chest high, both feet pointed straight ahead
- Take a step back with your left foot
- Point the big toe of your left foot toward your right heel (if your left foot is pointed out during this stretch, it will not be effective)
- Keep your head, shoulders, back and hips in alignment. Bend the right knee, keep the left knee straight.
- Lean into the wall, as in doing a push up.
- Keep your heels flat on the ground (adjust your stance if needed to feel the stretch)
- After holding the first for 20-30 seconds, slightly bend the back knee to stretch the deeper muscle group
- Switch sides and repeat



Frozen Can Roll



- Roll your bare foot back and forth from the tip of the toes to the heel over a frozen juice can or water bottle
- This a good exercise after activity because it no only stretches the plantar fascia but providers cold therapy to the injured areas

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Wall Stretch

- The heel should be on the ground and the toes on the wall, the other foot should be flat on the floor.
- Keep both legs straight and your body straight, do not lean body forward or stick your backside out.
- You should feel a strong stretch in the back of your calf and some stretch in the arch
- To increase the stretch, mover your heel closer to the wall and increase the angle of your foot.
- To decrease the stretch, mover your heel back and lowers your toes



HELPFUL TIPS



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- Avoid going barefoot
- Have shoes with an arch at the bedside
- Stretch breakfast, lunch, and dinner
- Apply ice or biofreeze to feet, no more than 3 times a day
- In addition to stretches, custom orthotics or a night splint may help to relieve strains and promote support to the feet.

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