

Plantar fasciitis

There are lots of tendons and ligaments in your feet. They twist and pull on tissue (muscle) in your feet to make it so that your feet are flexible and make all of the minute adjustments needed in order for you to walk. There is a long band of tissue that connects the heel bone to the toes and supports the arch in the foot. This is called the plantar fascia and when it gets inflamed the condition is referred to as plantar fasciitis. This can be a very painful condition because it is impossible to walk without putting stress on the plantar fascia, thus the inflammation increases the more you are on your feet. Sometimes the inflammation can become so intense that it begins to block circulation to the extent that swelling will occur in the legs as well.

Plantar fasciitis is one of the most common causes of heel pain. Generally the pain is a sharp, stabbing pain that is worse in the morning upon rising (overnight the plantar fascia has tightened) and will get better as you begin to move. However, as your day goes on and you spend time standing, walking, running, etc, the pain will increase again. Additionally, if you spend much time sitting so the plantar fascia tightens up again, you will experience pain again upon standing until it limbers up again.

Plantar fasciitis develops slowly over a long period of time and it can affect one or both feet. People who are most at risk are runners (or people who do a lot of exercise that places stress on the heels, dancing and aerobics for example), those who are overweight, those who wear shoes without adequate arch support (or those who have flat feet, high arches, or even the way you walk can contribute to your risk), people between the ages of 40 and 60, people who stand a lot on hard surfaces, and women who are pregnant. (Kind of makes you think everyone is at risk, doesn't it?)

If you ignore the pain what happens? It will get worse (unless you drastically change your lifestyle) and it can cause foot, hip, knee, or back problems because you will change the way you walk in order to decrease the pain. These problems will progress and you will develop more aches and pains as time goes by, so try to nip it in the bud before you hurt more.

Preventative and early onset measures include putting your feet up, applying ice when it hurts or after a workout, run shorter distances, trade in high impact exercises for low impact exercises until the pain subsides, add arch supports to your shoes, buy shoes with greater support (sometimes just buying a different pair of shoes can fix the problem, especially if your old shoes are worn out), make sure you stretch your arches before and after exercising just as you do (or should be doing) the rest of your body, make sure you warm up and cool down and maintain (or get to) a healthy weight

If you go to a doctor he will examine the foot, ask you questions about the symptoms and may or may not have you do an x-ray or MRI to make sure that there isn't a broken bone or other unsuspected problem. Then they will probably prescribe a regimen of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS), corticosteroids, physical therapy, night splints, orthotics, or special exercises. If these don't work then you may be looking at surgery to detach the plantar fascia from the heel bone (this weakens the arch in your foot, but shouldn't affect your ability to walk) or a procedure called extracorporeal shock wave

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therapy. This is a new therapy where sound waves are directed at the heel. This is supposed to stimulate healing, side effects include bruising, swelling, pain, numbness or tingling, and, according to the Mayo Clinic website, “it has not been shown to be consistently effective.”

Essential oils have shown excellent results in aiding with plantar fasciitis pain. There are many essential oils that have anti-inflammatory properties. There are also many essential oils that will help limber up and support muscles, tendons, and ligaments; as well as help with the cool down. The easiest essential oil to use in this case is a blend by Be Young called Physical Touch, it was designed with all things sport in mind—it aids in warm up, assists in cool down, supports tendons, nerves, muscles, and ligaments, promotes circulation and reduces inflammation. The Physical Touch oil blend contains Birch, Clove, Helichrysum, Basil, Cypress, Juniper, Lemongrass, Marjoram, Myrrh, Peppermint, and Nutmeg essential oils. You can apply 1-2 drops directly on the location of the pain as needed (as the pain subsides apply at least two times a day until you are sure the pain is gone).

Some other essential oils you may want to consider (note how many are in the Physical Touch blend):

- Chamomile (Roman or German)
- Birch
- Clove (this is a hot oil, be sure to have a carrier oil handy)
- Basil (especially good if you have cramping with the pain)
- Lemongrass (especially good if you’re experiencing additional tendon and ligament challenges)
- Marjoram
- Peppermint (another oil that can be warm, you may want a carrier oil)
- Helichrysum (especially good for the sharp, stabbing nerve pain)
- Copaiba
- Chiro Touch blend (Be Young) will assist in helping your body stay aligned (helps reduce the hip, knee, back, and foot problems that occur because you’re not walking right because of the pain)

The Be Young essential oils company also teaches a Physical Aromatic Touch program. This program includes an assessment procedure in which you determine which of seven essential oils can assist in reducing your pain and movement limitations. You may want to look into this.

To order, for class information, or if you have questions contact:

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