

Get proper diagnosis of your heel pain

Plantar fasciitis is a condition that results in a dull ache or sharp pain, usually in the front and bottom of the heel. It occurs when the plantar fascia, a ligament on the bottom of the foot that extends from the heel to the toes, becomes inflamed. The plantar fascia stretches and contracts, allowing the arch of the foot to curve or flatten. This provides balance and gives strength to the foot during activities.

Being overweight or rapid weight gain. Plantar fasciitis heel pain affects nearly one-third of overweight people. The added stress of carrying too much body weight can make heel pain that much worse and create a situation in which it becomes difficult to exercise. Consuming a healthy diet and engaging in nonimpact exercise such as swimming and biking can assist in losing excess pounds.

Trying to exercise through pain can cause heel problems to become long-term and debilitating, so it's always best to check with your doctor for guidelines and treatment. Typical initial treatment for heel pain includes rest; icing the heel; massage and gentle stretching of the feet, ankles and calves; review and modification of current exercise routine and daily activities; maintaining a healthy weight; and, if your doctor recommends it, taking a pain reliever. If pain persists, then your doctor will probably recommend other treatments, such as physical therapy, orthotics, night splints, using heel pads or, as a last resort, surgery. Many people experiment with different treatments before finding relief.

Not all heel pain is related to plantar fasciitis or heel spurs. Gait abnormalities, stress fractures, sciatica, systemic inflammatory conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, physical trauma and nerve compression/entrapment can also cause heel pain, so it is important to get proper diagnosis if you are experiencing problems.

About the Author

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