

Foot Problems?

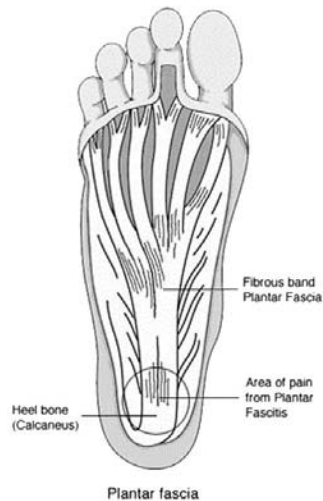
If you play tennis long enough, there are two common foot injuries (ankle sprain and plantar fasciitis) that you'll come to know eventually. I'll discuss ankle sprain briefly but I'll focus on plantar fasciitis.

Ankle Sprain—In many cases the foot turns inward, and causes pain and swelling on the outside of the ankle. The best way to avoid this injury is to purchase tennis shoes that are appropriate for the surface that you play with (remember, cross trainers shoes are not designed for tennis). If you are prone to ankle sprains then purchase high top shoes.

Plantar fasciitis (fashee-EYE-tiss) — If you experience severe pain in the heel of your foot when you walk then may have plantar fasciitis. It's an overuse injury affecting the sole or flexor surface (plantar) of the foot. A diagnosis of plantar fasciitis means you have inflamed the tough, fibrous band of tissue (fascia) connecting your heel bone to the base of your toes.

Who are prone to Plantar fasciitis?

Woman, if you have flat feet or very high arches, if you're overweight, or if you have a job that requires a lot of walking or standing on hard surfaces. You're also at risk if you walk or run for exercise, especially if you have tight calf



muscles that limit how far you can flex your ankles.

The condition starts gradually with mild pain at the heel bone often referred to as a stone bruise. You're more likely to feel it after (not during) exercise. If you don't treat plantar fasciitis, it may become a chronic condition. You may not be able to keep up your level of activity and you may also develop symptoms of foot, knee, hip and back problems because of the way plantar fasciitis changes the way you walk.

How can I treat it, short and long term??

Short Term—Rest until the inflammation goes away (keep weight off your

foot). Apply ice to the sore area for 20 minutes three or four times a day to relieve your symptoms. Often a doctor will prescribe nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medication such as ibuprofen. If you choose medication treatment consult your doctor about long term use of ibuprofen which does have some side effects.

Long term—exercises to stretch your Achilles tendon and plantar fascia are the best way to treat the condition and lessening the chance of recurrence or purchase an orthotic (a flexible type not hard plastic). Orthotics are available two ways, off the shelf or customized (see a specialist).

Exercises

For stretching the Achilles tendon, the classic one of leaning forward against a wall with one knee straight and heel on the ground. Your other knee is bent. Your heel cord and foot arch stretch as you lean. Hold for 10 seconds, relax and straighten up. Repeat 20 times for each sore heel.

For plantar fascia is place a towel on the floor and try to pick up the towel with curling your toes. Another exercise is to roll a tennis ball over the arch.

If you want more information on this subject or any other orthopaedic problem. Go to American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons website: <http://orthoinfo.aaos.org>