

Exercises for the treatment of plantar fasciitis

The majority of cases of plantar fasciitis eventually improve and resolve with specific stretches and exercises. It is important to follow the instructions and to do the exercises regularly.

It may be initially uncomfortable to start with, but repeated stretches and exercises will improve the symptoms in most patients. Painkillers maybe needed for the first few weeks. But it is important to persevere with the exercises and stretches and perform them regularly. It can take up to a few months for the symptoms to resolve in some cases, but over 80% are better by 6 months.

The following stretches and exercises should be performed 2 to 3 times per day. It is often helpful to do the exercises first thing in the morning and towards the end of the day (when the symptoms are generally worse).

Exercise 1 – Tennis ball/cold can massage



While sitting in a chair, roll a small hard ball e.g. a golf ball / tennis ball under your foot for a few minutes. Alternatively, a cold soft drink can help with pain and inflammation.

Gently roll your bare foot backwards and forwards over the bottle for a few minutes, concentrating under the heel and along the foot. Use enough force so that you feel a deep massage.

Exercise 2 – Manual heel tissue massage



Sitting with affected leg crossed over other leg.

Pull your ankle and toes up towards you until a stretch is felt in the arch of your foot. This is best done by pulling the big toe backwards.

Hold for 30 seconds.

Repeat 6 times.

While in this position, you can gently massage along the instep of your foot and the base of the heel.

Exercise 3 – Calf stretch



Put the affected leg behind you.

Stand with both feet facing forwards and heel on the ground.

Keep the affected leg straight and the heel to the ground. Lean into the wall until a stretch is felt in the calf of your back leg.

Hold for 30 seconds.

Repeat 6 times.

Exercise 4 – Soleus stretch



Put the affected leg behind you.

Stand with both feet facing forwards and heels on the ground.

Keeping both heels to the ground, **bend both knees** until a stretch is felt in the calf of your back leg.

Hold for 30 seconds.

Repeat 6 times.

Exercise 5 – Plantar fascia stretch



Put the ball of the affected foot on edge of step.

Stretch heel down towards floor until a stretch is felt in the calf and arch of the foot.

Hold for 30 seconds.

Repeat 6 times

Exercise 6 – Towel stretch



Using a towel or band, place it around the ball of the foot.

Keep the knees straight

Pull the foot backwards until you feel a stretch in the back of the calf.

Hold for 30 seconds

Repeat 6 times

Remember to follow the instructions and do the exercises regularly. Most patients get better with these exercises (sometimes in combination with other treatments such as heel gel insoles), it can take a few weeks to notice the benefits and a few months for the symptoms to resolve.

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