

HEEL PAIN

Heel pain is most often caused by plantar fasciitis—a condition that is sometimes also called heel spur syndrome when a spur is present. Heel pain may also be due to other causes, such as a stress fracture, tendonitis, arthritis, nerve irritation, or, rarely, a cyst.

Because there are several potential causes, it is important to have heel pain properly diagnosed. A podiatric foot and ankle surgeon is best trained to distinguish between all the possibilities and determine the underlying source of your heel pain.

What Is Plantar Fasciitis?

Plantar fasciitis is an inflammation of the band of tissue (the plantar fascia) that extends from the heel to the toes. In this condition, the fascia first becomes irritated and then inflamed—resulting in heel pain.

The symptoms of plantar fasciitis are:

- Pain on the bottom of the heel
- Pain that is usually worse upon arising
- Pain that increases over a period of months

People with plantar fasciitis often describe the pain as worse when they get up in the morning or after they've been sitting for long periods of time. After a few minutes of walking the pain decreases, because walking stretches the fascia. For some people the pain subsides but returns after spending long periods of time on their feet.

Causes of Plantar Fasciitis

The most common cause of plantar fasciitis relates to faulty structure of the foot. For example, people who have problems with their arches—either overly flat feet or high-arched feet—are more prone to developing plantar fasciitis.

Wearing non-supportive footwear

on hard, flat surfaces puts abnormal strain on the plantar fascia and can also lead to plantar fasciitis.

This is particularly evident when a person's job requires long hours on their feet. Obesity also contributes to plantar fasciitis.



Treatment Options

Treatment of plantar fasciitis begins with first-line strategies, which you can begin at home:

- **Stretching exercises**
- **Avoid going barefoot**
- **Ice**
- **Limit activities**

If you still have pain after several weeks call for an appointment with Dr. Cain or Dr. Cauthon. They may add one or more of these treatments:

- **Orthotic devices.** Custom orthotic devices that fit into your shoe to help correct the weak foot structure.
- **Injection therapy.** In some cases, corticosteroid injections are used to help reduce the inflammation.
- **Night splint.** Wearing a night splint stretches the fascia and relieve pain.
- **Other treatment.** There are other choices including medication, physical therapy and walking cast.

When Is Surgery Needed?

In some cases surgery is needed when the pain persists. Options include Orthotripsy (Extracorporeal shock wave therapy) and endoscopic surgery.

The choice of surgery depends on several factors. Drs. Cain and Cauthon can assist you with your heel pain.