

A quick guide to:

# HEEL PAIN



Heel pain is one of the most common foot disorders. Deep pain in the heel is known as plantar fasciitis which is the inflammation of the band of tissue (the plantar fascia) that extends from the heel to the toes and constitutes the arch of the foot.

## APPEARANCE

Heel pain and plantar fasciitis do not always have external symptoms. Pain can usually be located when pressure is applied under the heel. Where there are tears in the plantar fascia the area can look bruised.

## CAUSES

The two main causes of heel pain are sudden damage and gradual 'wear and tear'. Sudden damage usually affects younger or more physically active people. It can occur whilst participating in activities that put strain on the feet such as running or dancing. Gradual 'wear and tear' of the plantar fascia usually affects adults over the age of 40 but can also occur in those who are overweight, those who spend prolonged periods of time on their feet or those who regularly wear very flat soled shoes.

Less common causes include stress fractures, the wearing away of the fatty pads under the heel and bursitis, an inflammation of one or more bursae - small fluid filled sacs under the skin that are usually found over the joints and between tendons and bones.

## SYMPTOMS

Heel pain usually builds up gradually, getting worse over time. It can present as a sharp, severe pain when weight is placed on the heel. In the majority of cases, only one heel is affected with less than a quarter of people with the condition experiencing pain in both heels.

The pain is usually at its worst first thing in the morning or after long periods of inactivity. It should gradually improve as you start to move around but can become aggravated again by the end of the day.

## PREVENTION

Appropriate footwear can go a long way to preventing heel pain, as can maintaining a healthy weight. Shoes with a moderate heel (about an inch) will support and cushion your arches and heels. Completely flat shoes can actually exacerbate the condition.

Sports shoes should be replaced regularly as they wear out. Many sportswear experts recommend that you replace your trainers every 500 miles you run in them.

## TREATMENT

Depending on the severity of the pain, a variety of treatments can be tried in combination to remedy the heel pain. Painkillers can help in the short term; otherwise, resting the foot by avoiding standing or walking for long periods will allow the inflammation to subside.

There are also various exercises that can be done to stretch both the calf muscles and the plantar fascia that should improve flexibility and relieve pain.

Orthotic devices can help to control heel strike and support the long arch of the foot. By stabilising and balancing the foot and reducing pronation (rolling in of the foot as we walk) they can offer long term relief from heel and arch pain.

For more information please visit:

[www.carnationfootcare.co.uk](http://www.carnationfootcare.co.uk)

or speak to your podiatrist.