

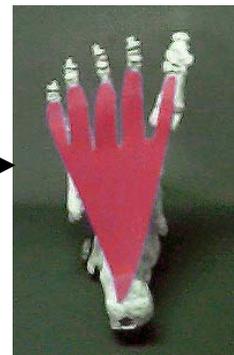
PLANTAR FASCIITIS

AS RELATED TO CYCLISTS

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Plantar fasciitis is an inflammation of the strong tissue that runs along the bottom of the foot and connects the heel to the base of the toes (see image). This common overuse injury can be caused by improper fitting of bicycle clip shoes or other shoes, constant pressure on the plantar fascia from the bicycle pedals, insufficient support of the feet, and improper positioning of the hips, knees and feet on the bicycle. Plantar Fasciitis is characterized by heel pain that is worse in the morning with the first few steps. Since it is difficult to rest the foot, this problem gradually worsens and the pain spreads to the remainder of the bottom of the foot. With progression, pain may start interfering with activities of daily living.

Plantar Fascia
(Bottom of Foot)



Other Potential Causes Include:

- Weak foot muscles
- Tight Achilles tendon
- Flat or high arches
- Poor shoe support
- Sudden increase in activity level
- Sudden increase in weight

Effective Treatment Will Address:

- Decreasing pain
- Restoring flexibility to tight structures surrounding the arch and ankle
- Strengthening the muscles in and around the foot
- *GRADUAL* return to full activity

Therapy and manipulation of the foot and ankle is the treatment of choice, but there are some simple and effective things that you can do. There is a specific taping technique that I do for patients with this entity that relieves the pain immediately. This is a temporary support technique while the plantar fascia heals.

Your Role In The Treatment Process

Rest:

Use pain as your guide. Initially, avoid prolonged walking, running or jumping.

Cold Therapy:

Ice can help decrease pain. For best results ice should be applied four times daily to the injured area. Ice packs for 15-20 minutes each application.

Medication:

Anti-inflammatory pain relievers available at the drug store can help decrease discomfort.

Shoes:

Use of appropriate footwear for daily activities and sports is very important.

Taping:

Plantar fascia taping can also provide some relief of your symptoms. The tape will decrease your pain by distributing force away from the stressed plantar fascia.

Orthotics:

I may suggest using a shoe insert or orthotic device to decrease the forces at the site of the injury. Over the counter heel pads or heel cups can provide force distribution and reduce the pull of a tight Achilles Tendon, therefore decreasing your symptoms.

Stretching and Strengthening:

As soon as swelling and pain begin to subside it is important to start a proper stretching program. The stretching should be gentle and prolonged, using a slow, static stretch. Each stretch should be performed three times a day holding each stretch for one minute and repeating ten times each session. Stretching exercises should include the *gastroc*, *soleus* and *intrinsic muscles* of the foot.



Calf or *Gastroc* Stretch



Soleus Stretch



Intrinsic Muscle Stretch

Once muscle flexibility is attained, and you remain pain free, strengthening the involved muscles is your goal. An appropriate strengthening program will help prevent the reoccurrence of this condition. The above exercises performed three times per day for 20 times each session will help provide muscular support to a weakened plantar fascia. If you have a chronic problem, taping/bracing your foot before every ride will help to prevent re-injury.

Adjustments to your bike to insure that you have the proper fit for your body are very important. Plantar fasciitis sufferers can return to pain-free, full-activity with proper rehabilitation. Return to activity should be gradual and guided by your pain. Proper footwear, and a stretching/ strengthening program can help prevent reoccurrence of this condition.