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# Foot Pain Exercises

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There are two main aims of physiotherapy for **plantar fasciitis**. The first is to control inflammation; the second is to stretch the muscles and connective tissue in the calf. Symptoms of plantar fasciitis are often brought on or made worse by tightening of these tissues. These exercises should take about 15 minutes a day. Once your symptoms are controlled it's worth getting into the habit of doing them once or twice a day to reduce the risk of symptoms coming back.

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## 1. Inflammation control

### a) Ice bag

- Fill a bag with ice (do not apply ice directly to the skin).
- Press the ice bag under your foot for about 12-15 minutes.

### b) Ice bottle



- Fill a round bottle with water and place in the freezer overnight.
- Cover the bottle with a thin wet tea towel and roll your foot on the bottle, adding pressure through the foot. Do this for about **one to two** minutes for each foot (if both are affected).
- Complete as many times daily as possible.
- This method is most effective first thing in the morning, when symptoms tend to be at their worst.

## 2. Calf and fascia stretches

Fascia is a band of tough connective tissue that connects muscles and other organs together and provides stability. These exercises are aimed at stretching both the fascia and the many muscles in your calves, to help relieve symptoms of plantar fasciitis.

## Gastrocnemius muscle



- Stand with both feet forward, facing towards a wall.
- With your hands resting on the wall for support, step one foot back into a lunge position.
- Feel a stretch in the big calf muscle in the back of the lower leg by increasing the bend in the front knee. Be sure to keep the back heel flat on the floor.
- Hold the stretch for 20 seconds, repeat three times with each leg, 2-3 times daily.

## Soleus muscle



- Stand with both feet forward, facing towards a wall.
- Place the left foot just behind the right.
- To stretch the right soleus, bend your right knee as much as possible without the right heel leaving the floor.
- The aim is to feel the stretch in the lower part of your right calf.
- Hold the stretch for 20 seconds; repeat three times with each leg, 2-3 times daily.

## Achilles tendon and deep calf stretch



- Stand on a step with your heel hanging off the end of the step.
- Hold on to something for support.
- Drop both heels downwards towards the floor, feeling a stretch in the calf muscles and the Achilles tendon.
- Hold for 20 seconds; repeat three times, 2-3 times daily.

## Fascia stretches

- Stand with the toes of one foot up against the wall.
- Push your toes into the wall and your foot down towards the floor to feel a stretch in the fascia (underneath the foot).
- Hold for 20 seconds; repeat three times, 2-3 times daily..

## 3. Provision of arch supports and heel pads

If you can have a biomechanics assessment with a podiatrist that can really help.

If you know you have a flat foot (decreased arch) you may require orthotics for your shoes to help support your arches. These come in three forms:

1. **Over-the-counter:** these can be found in most chemists. I would recommend three-quarter length so as to fit into all shoes and trainers.
2. **Heat-molded orthotics:** these can be purchased from most physiotherapy clinics. They are more tailored orthotics that are heated and molded to your foot, depending on your specific biomechanics and symptoms. They normally cost £30-£50.
3. **Podiatrist assessment:** this is the most expensive but by far the most specific orthotic provision. The process, including assessment and fitted orthotics, normally costs between £200-£500. These orthotics are tailor-made following extensive assessment. I would recommend this type of insoles for those with chronic symptoms.
4. **Taping:** kinesiology (K Tape) is the most popular and effective taping technique for plantar fasciitis. It can be completed by the patient themselves, is waterproof and can last for up to three days.

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