What is Plantar Fasciitis?

You might have heard it called "*plantar fasciitis*," "*plantar fasciopathy*," or even "*heel spur syndrome*."

Although the names sound different, they all describe pain felt underneath the heel. To keep things simple and accurate, we'll call it plantar heel pain.

In the past, this condition was thought to be caused by inflammation ("*-itis*" usually means inflammation). But research now shows it's more about wear and changes in the tissue over time, not just inflammation.

The good news: Most people get better with the right approach and a little patience.

WHY DOES PLANTAR FASCIITIS HAPPEN?

Your plantar fascia is a strong band of tissue that connects your heel to your toes. It helps support the arch of your foot and absorb the forces from walking and running.

Over time, or under extra load (like lots of walking, standing, running, or changes in weight), this tissue can become overloaded. That's when pain and stiffness often show up, especially with the first few steps in the morning or after sitting for a while.

COMMON SYMPTOMS

- **Sharp or aching pain under the heel**
- **Worse pain with your first steps in the morning**
- **Pain after standing or walking for a long time**
- **Sometimes, tenderness if you press the bottom of your heel**

THINGS THAT CAN CONTRIBUTE

- **Activity changes:** A sudden increase in walking, running, or standing
- **Foot shape:** Flat feet or very high arches
- **Footwear:** Shoes that lack cushioning or support
- **Weight:** Extra weight increases pressure on your feet
- **Job demands:** Work that requires long hours on your feet
- **Tight muscles:** Especially the calf muscles

COMMON MYTHS

✗ **Heel Spurs Cause the Pain**
Many people with heel spurs have no pain at all. The discomfort usually comes from changes in the plantar fascia itself, not the spur.

✗ **It's Permanent**
Most people recover well with the right care. It can take a few months, but lasting recovery is very possible.

✗ **You Must Stop All Activity**
Gentle movement actually helps healing. Complete rest can make things worse by stiffening the tissues.

✗ **Only Older People Get It**
While it's more common after age 40, younger people (especially active ones) can experience plantar heel pain too.

WHAT HELPS

1. Stretching and Strengthening

- Gentle stretching of your calf and the bottom of your foot
- Building strength in your foot and ankle muscles to better support your arch

2. Manual Therapy
Some hands-on treatments, like soft tissue work and joint mobilizations, can help reduce pain and improve movement.

3. Taping
Supportive taping can give short-term relief, especially during activities.

4. Footwear Adjustments

- Supportive, cushioned shoes
- Sometimes, short-term use of orthotic insoles

5. Weight Management
If weight is a factor, gradual changes can ease pressure on the feet over time.

6. Night Splints (in some cases)
For people who find mornings especially painful, night splints can gently stretch the foot overnight.

7. Shockwave or Laser Therapy
Some clinics offer treatments like shockwave therapy or low-level laser therapy. These can help some people when combined with a full rehab plan.

8. Injections or Surgery (rarely needed)
These are last-resort options if conservative care hasn't helped after several months. Most people won't need them.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Plantar heel pain can be frustrating, but it's also very manageable. With the right guidance, good self-care, and a little persistence, most people make a strong recovery.

Working with a qualified clinician can help you find the approach that suits you best — your journey, your pace.

A FEW IMPORTANT POINTS

- **Keep moving** — within comfort limits.
- **Progress takes time** — improvements are usually gradual.
- **Treatment works best** when it's tailored to your needs and lifestyle.
- **You have options** — there's rarely only one "right" path.

MARK BEASLEY
COACHING . THERAPY . TRAINING

01455 634072

mark@mark-beasley.co.uk

mark-beasley.co.uk