

THAT FIRST STEP OUT OF BED... OUCH

If your heel pain hits its hardest when you get out of bed or stand up after sitting, you're not imagining it – and you're not alone. That sharp, stabbing pain is a classic sign of plantar heel pain (often called plantar fasciitis), a condition that affects over 1 in 10 people at some point. The pain typically occurs at the front of the heel bone where the plantar fascia attaches.

This leaflet explains why the pain is worse in the morning – and most importantly, what you can start doing to change that.

1 WHY IT HURTS MOST IN THE MORNING

Overnight, your foot is in a relaxed, shortened position. The plantar fascia (a thick band of tissue along the bottom of your foot) tightens while you sleep. This band runs from your heel bone to your toes, acting like a shock-absorbing bowstring that supports your arch.

When you take that first step in the morning, this tissue suddenly stretches – and that micro-tearing or irritation flares up painfully. The sudden strain on the tight tissue causes those characteristic sharp, stabbing sensations.

"I used to dread getting out of bed. It was like stepping on a knife for the first 10 minutes." – Shared in an online support group (Mar '25)

It's the same reason why pain returns after long periods of sitting – the tissue tightens, then gets re-stretched. The pain typically eases after a few minutes of movement as the tissue warms up and becomes more flexible.

2 THIS DOESN'T MEAN YOUR FOOT IS 'DAMAGED'

Most people with plantar heel pain recover fully within 6-12 months, and many see improvement much sooner with proper care. It's just that the tissue is inflamed and extra-sensitive – and it needs the right kind of support to calm down.

3 START HERE: 3 THINGS THAT REALLY HELP

✓ Do a gentle foot warm-up before standing**

- Point and flex your toes 10 times
- Roll your foot over a cold or ice water bottle for 2-3 minutes
- Do slow calf stretches while still in bed, holding each stretch for 30 seconds

✓ Wear supportive shoes – even indoors

- Flat feet + hard floors = flare-ups
- Try cushioned trainers or supportive slippers with arch support
- Look for shoes with a slightly raised heel (1-2 cm) to reduce strain

✓ Give your foot consistent movement

- Don't stop walking altogether – that weakens tissue
- But don't overdo it either. Stick to short, steady walking (10-15 minutes) and avoid barefoot time
- Gradually increase activity as symptoms improve

4 WHAT NOT TO DO

- ✗ Don't rely only on painkillers – they won't solve the root issue
- ✗ Don't go barefoot on hard floors

Why Your Foot Hurts First Thing in the Morning (And What to Do About It?)

What it means, why it happens, and how to fix it

- ✗ Don't push through pain if it makes you limp – that can create other issues
- ✗ Don't suddenly increase your activity level or exercise intensity
- ✗ Don't ignore persistent swelling or night pain – see a healthcare provider

5 THIS IS TREATABLE – AND EARLIER IS BETTER

The earlier you start managing it, the quicker you can improve. A practitioner trained in foot and movement issues (like a physio, osteo, chiro, podiatrist, or sports therapist) can guide you with:

- Tailored stretches and specific exercises for your condition
- Gradual loading exercises to strengthen the foot and ankle
- Footwear advice based on your foot type and daily activities
- Taping or manual therapy to provide immediate relief
- Gait analysis to identify and correct movement patterns
- Custom orthotics if needed

Top 3 Things to Try This Week:

- ✓ Start each morning with 3-5 minutes of gentle foot stretches
- ✓ Get rid of barefoot time – wear trainers or supportive sandals indoors
- ✓ Keep a foot roller or frozen bottle by your bed or desk for regular tissue massage

It doesn't have to hurt to start the day.

That sharp morning pain is common – but it's not permanent. With a few small adjustments, most people start seeing improvements in just a few weeks. Some notice reduced morning pain within 2-3 weeks of consistent care.

And if you're unsure what's right for you, reach out to a qualified professional. Remember, early intervention often means faster recovery.

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