



how can I heal plantar fasciitis?

Treat aching feet with new shoes, a massage ball, or some easy stretches.

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Photograph by BONNIE HOLLAND

Podiatrist

Characterized by a sharp pain in the heel, plantar fasciitis is an inflammation of the muscles, tendons, and tissues that connect the heel to the toes. Common causes are flat feet, excessive pronation, overtraining, weight gain, wearing the wrong shoes, or even walking barefoot on hard floors. If you think you have it, **get your foot examined by a podiatrist**, who may suggest a custom orthotic insert or a supportive athletic shoe like New Balance or Saucony. **Avoid wearing heels higher than two inches**; look for a wide shoe that has a back (the Munro line at Nordstrom is superb). A podiatrist may **alleviate severe pain by taping the foot** or by prescribing a strong dose of ibuprofen or a cortisone shot. With treatment, most patients can resume their regular exercise routines.

—Cary Zinkin, D.P.M., podiatric physician in Deerfield Beach, Fla., and spokesperson for the American Podiatric Medical Association

Reflexologist

Using a technique similar to acupressure, reflexologists apply pressure to the feet and hands. When treating someone, I get a rundown of their walking and exercise habits and determine the exact spot that's bothering them. Then I rub the muscles and tendons and **use a method called thumb-walking** to look for sophisticated reflexes to bring relief. You can help yourself by interrupting the pain: **Take your foot in your hands and rub it**. You don't have to be an expert—you can even **roll the bottom of your foot on a tennis ball** or a plastic, spiked ball like a GooseBumps massage ball. (See *gaiam.com*.) Just remember that timely intervention is key. If you're on a hike and your foot starts to tighten up, take your boots off and rub your foot right then.

—Kevin Kunz, reflexologist at the Reflexology Research Project in Albuquerque, N.M., and author of *Complete Reflexology for Life* (DK Penguin, 2006)

Gyrotonic Trainer

Using specialized pulley machines to improve flexibility, balance, and muscle strength and to increase overall mobility in joints, Gyrotonic is an excellent preventative measure. If you can't get to a studio, try **Gyrokinesis**, an at-home Gyrotonic treatment. Foot Awakening, for example, is a one-minute self-massage in which you **knead the arch of the foot, spread the toes, then do ankle circles**. To do Leg Extensions, sit on a stool or bench and **stretch out one leg on the floor in front of you, flexing the ankle** so you can stretch through the heel. Gently rock your body forward, then rock back just enough to switch legs. Try this twice with your toes pointed toward the knee and twice with the toes pointed toward the ground. Do these exercises at least once a day while the problem persists, and three times a week as prevention.

—Jennifer McCasland Daly, co-owner and Gyrotonic master trainer at Kinespirit in New York City