

Heel Pain

Plantar fasciitis — and the footwear that fixes it

YOU RECOGNISE IT BY THE FIRST STEP

Classic plantar fasciitis is **worst with the first few steps in the morning**, or after sitting a while, then eases as you walk, then worsens again by the end of the day.

About the "heel spur": if your X-ray shows one, it is almost certainly not the cause of your pain. Many people with spurs have no pain, and many with this pain have no spur. Treatment is the same either way — **the spur does not need removing**.

It is slow to settle — often **6 to 12 months** — but the great majority get better without surgery.

FOOTWEAR — THE MOST IMPORTANT TREATMENT

Wear cushioned footwear from the moment you get out of bed. Keep a soft pair of slippers beside your bed and put them on before your feet touch the floor.

What to look for: a soft cushioned sole, a **slight heel raise of 1-2 cm** (not flat, not high), good arch support, and a firm heel cup that holds the heel steady.

MCR (microcellular rubber) chappals or a good cushioned sports shoe work well. A silicone heel cup or gel pad inside the shoe helps many people.

Avoid completely: walking barefoot, especially on hard floors · flat hard chappals · thin-soled sandals · high heels · worn-out shoes

Exercises — do these daily

- **Before your first step in the morning:** sitting on the bed, pull your toes back towards you and hold for 30 seconds. Repeat three times. This alone helps that first-step pain considerably.
- **Calf stretch:** hands on a wall, one leg back with the heel down and the knee straight. Hold 30 seconds, 3 times each side, twice daily. **A tight calf is the commonest underlying cause.**
- **Roll the sole** over a frozen water bottle or a ball for 5 minutes, twice a day.
- **Towel scrunches** with the toes to strengthen the small foot muscles.

Also: reduce weight if you are overweight — heel pain is strongly linked to it. Cut down standing on hard floors for long periods. Ice the heel for 15 minutes at the end of the day.

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