

# Fasciitis can cause heel pain

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Heel pain is a problem that physicians see regularly in their patients.

The most common cause of heel pain is plantar fasciitis. It occurs when the plantar fascia ligament that originates under the heel and extends across the arch of the foot to the toes becomes inflamed.

When the plantar fascia becomes inflamed, it can cause significant aching or sharp pain, usually directly under the heel.

It's irritated with weight-bearing activities, such as standing, walking or running. Also, it's common for patients' feet to hurt when getting out of bed the first thing in the morning or after sitting for extended periods of time.

Runners, those who work while standing most of the day and those who work on hard surfaces often suffer from plantar fasciitis.

More than 90 percent of patients with plantar fasciitis can be treated successfully through conservative methods, which include resting, calf stretching and wearing well-cushioned shoes and over-the-counter heel cushions.

Some patients may also require physical therapy, anti-inflammatory medications or using a special brace at night. It can take as long as six months for the pain to subside with these methods.

For patients with symptoms that continue for more than six months, a

new procedure called orthotripsy is available. This procedure involves high-energy shock waves (similar to the treatment of kidney stones) to increase blood flow to the plantar fascia to allow it to heal.

This outpatient procedure requires a light anesthetic. No incision is made and the patient can bear weight immediately after the procedure, typically while wearing a gym shoe.

The patient may feel mild discomfort after the procedure, but non-strenuous activity is allowed a few days afterward.

Patients typically improve gradually during the several weeks after the procedure, with maximum improvement attained at about 12 weeks.

Risks of this procedure are minimal, but they may include bruising, numbness/tingling and in rare cases, rupture of the plantar fascia.

Research studies have shown success rates equal to or greater than traditional surgery without the inherent risks, complication rates or recovery time of invasive surgery.

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