

Plantar Fasciitis Tip Sheet (Easy-Print, Easy-Read Version)

Plantar Fasciitis Tips & Exercises

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Plantar Fascia Tips

1. Footwear is ESSENTIAL. Wear a good, supportive shoe with a rubber sole that is $\frac{3}{4}$ " to 1" thick. Often when patients are struggling to kick their heel pain, they haven't taken the footwear recommendation seriously [C]. While you're recovering, minimize the time you spend barefoot or in unsupportive shoes (flip flops, ballet flats, and flat sneakers are the worst offenders).
2. Stretch your calves! The #1 factor correlated with plantar fasciitis is "loss of dorsiflexion" (typically caused by calf tightness) [1]. We're talking stretching 3 x 30 second holds, 3-5x per day!

Plantar Fasciitis Exercises at a Glance [C]

1. Calf Stretch [1]
2. Big Toe Stretch [2]
3. Plantar Fascia Rollout
4. Towel Scrunch
5. Ankle In-Sweeps & Out Sweeps (Inversion & Eversion)

My
Restorative
Physical Therapy

Plantar Fasciitis Exercises

Calf Stretch

Why? Loss of Dorsiflexion increases likelihood that you will develop plantar fasciitis [1]. Win by making sure that you have enough dorsiflexion (calf flexibility) [C].

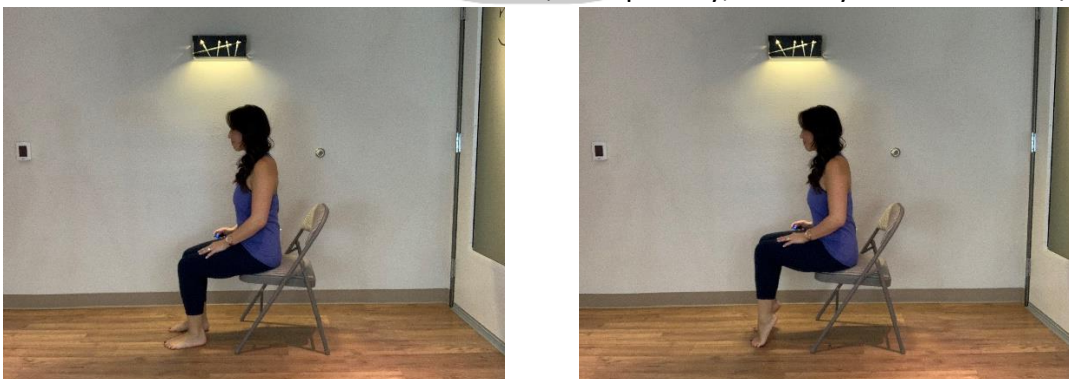
1. Put both hands on a wall at about shoulder height.
2. Place your feet in a staggered/ lunge stance. Make sure toes on both feet are pointing straight forward.
3. On the back leg, keep the heel on the floor and your knee straight.
4. Extra Credit to More Thoroughly Stretch the Calf: Perform the same stretch with your knee slightly bent (heel should still be on the floor).
5. Recommendation: 3 x 20-30 second holds, 3-5x per day, Intensity not to exceed 4/10.



Big Toe Stretch

Why? Big toe extension increases tension on the plantar fascia. Ensuring good big toe flexibility decreases this tension [2].

1. Sit in a chair with your feet flat on the floor.
2. Lift your heels with the intent to stretch your big toe.
3. Recommendation: 3 x 20-30 second holds, 3-5x per day, Intensity not to exceed 4/10.



Plantar Fascia Rollout

Why? To decrease tightness and tension through the plantar fascia. But also... Because it feels good!

1. While seated, roll the arch of your foot on a ball. Tennis, golf, and lacrosse balls are common go-to's, but for anyone who has ever actually suffered from this condition, the Rubz Ball by Due North is my recommendation.
2. Just a couple of minutes of rolling goes a long way to decreasing plantar fascia tightness and pain.



Towel Scrunch

Why? Muscles support the arch of your foot, so the plantar fascia isn't left doing all the work by itself. Towel scrunches target the "intrinsic" muscle group of the foot, so the plantar fascia can finally get a chance to rest.

1. Sitting down, scrunch the length of the towel using just your toes.
2. I typically practice scrunching the length of the hand towel 5 times.
3. Recommendation: Practice 3-5x per day to restore the control of your arch/ foot quickly. Respect your soreness. If your foot is too sore with practicing 3-5x per day, do less.



Ankle In Sweeps & Out Sweeps (Inversion & Eversion)

Why? “Extrinsic” muscles also support the arch of the foot. Strengthening these muscles also decreases the plantar fascia’s load.

1. Sit with legs long and heels hanging off the edge of the bed or sofa.
2. Practice SLOWLY sweeping your foot inward first 10x.
3. Then practice SLOWLY sweeping your foot outward 10x.
4. Tips: Expect there to be 3x as much inward motion compared to outward. This is NORMAL ankle mechanics! Keep your shin pointing vertical. The movement should be coming from the ankle itself, not from rotation of the leg.
5. Recommendation: Start with 10, progress to 3 x 12-15. The more often you can do this, the better control your foot will have. Still don’t push through excessive soreness/ pain.



Still Want More?

Additional Footwear Recommendations [C]

I almost universally recommend an “athletic shoe” from the following brands:

Asics
Brooks
Mizuno
Saucony

But what about all the other brands? I can be pretty certain that “any” shoe from the previous 4 brands will have the essential pieces of support that I’m looking for. This does not mean that

other brands are bad. Other brands can have good shoes, but they also definitely have some shoes that are not doing your plantar fascia any favors. See the “How to Shoe” Guide/ Video on the website if you’re looking for more information.

Favorite Gadgets & Gizmos (All prices checked at date of writing. Links available on website).

1. Rubz Ball (\$5.99 online) [C].
2. Feetures Socks (\$12.99-\$17.99/ pair online) [C]. These socks are magic. I used to wear them only for my athletic shoes/ running. Now, I wear them all the time. The subtle arch support in the sock itself prevents my plantar fascia from getting irritated, the fabric is wicking/ odor-decreasing, and the socks are virtually blister-proof. Due to the thin double-layering technology, any friction occurs between the layers of the socks rather than at the skin on your foot. Therefore, no blisters.
3. Superfeet (~\$50/ per pair online or in stores) [C]. Green/ Lime Green. Just like our brains, our feet are really complicated. Rarely, have I found a pair of custom-made orthotics that are worth the cost compared to the ease/ accessibility of the classic Green Superfeet. Tip: “Break in” your orthotics like a pair of shoes. Expect to tolerate your new orthotics for 1 hour on Day 1. Add an additional hour, until you’re wearing your orthotics your desired full time.
4. Slantboard Calf Stretcher (Varying prices online) [C]. Since I personally suffer from chronic ankle and foot issues, this has been a worth investment. Stretch your calves like a champ by using a slantboard.

The Weigh-In On Other Recommendations

There are many other treatments that are common for plantar fasciitis. However, in my personal experience, I have never felt the need to routinely recommend:

- Rolling the bottom of the foot on an iced water bottle.
- Night Splints [3]. Wearing socks/ anything on my feet and actually being able to sleep at night is not possible for me. As a rule, I do not recommend any treatment that I cannot tolerate/ cannot personally find benefit. Therefore, I cannot recommend Night Splints.
- Cortisone Injection
- Custom Orthotics [4]

References:

[C]= Informed by Dr. Jenny Prewitt's Clinical Experience.

[P]= Informed by multiple patient cases with patients emphasizing what was useful for them.

[#]= Any bracket with a # inside it comes from the research materials provided below.

1. Riddle DL, Pulisic M, Pidcoe P, Johnson RE. Risk factors for plantar fasciitis: a matched case-control study. [Erratum appears in *J Bone Joint Surg Am.* 2003;85(7):1338]. *J Bone Joint Surg Am.* 2003;85(5):872-877.
2. DiGiovanni BF, Nawoczenski DA, Lintal ME, et al. Tissue-specific plantar fascia-stretching exercise enhances outcomes in patients with chronic heel pain. A prospective, randomized study. *J Bone Joint Surg Am.* 2003;85(7):1270-1277.
3. League AC. Current concepts review: plantar fasciitis. *Foot Ankle Int.* 2008;29(3):358-366.
4. Hawke F, Burns J, Radford JA, du Toit V. Custom-made foot orthoses for the treatment of foot pain. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev.* 2008;(3):CD006801.

