

# Good News for Troubled Feet



By:

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Do your feet hurt? There are a couple of things worse than your feet hurting, but not many. It makes getting through the day tough, and certainly cuts down on the fun things we do after work, such as grocery shopping, house work, laundry and chasing after the kids.

One of the reasons for foot pain is plantar fasciitis. Pain from plantar fasciitis can affect both the arch and the heel of the foot. The plantar fascia is a thick broad band of tissue that runs along the bottom surface of the foot. This band of tissue can get tight and cause pain.



What causes the band to get tight? Walking, sitting, wearing high heels, wearing shoes without good arch support, walking barefoot or in flip flops, and performing sports. Also I

hate to say this, but the muscle tissue gets tighter as we get older because we don't stretch on a daily basis! As we age, our foot gets flatter and this can lead to plantar fasciitis.

When the muscle tissue gets tight, daily micro repetitive tears start happening in the plantar fascia, causing pain. The rate of tears happens quicker than the body's natural ability to repair itself. The end result is foot pain. It might occur across the arch of the foot, it might be localized to a point between the heel and the arch, it might be in just the heel or the pain may be felt in all three locations.

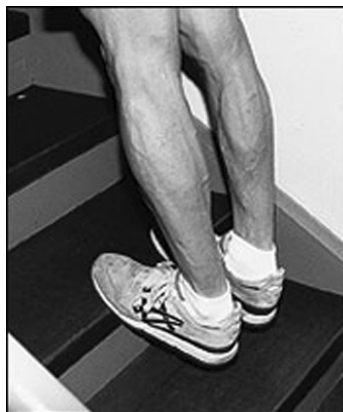
One sign of plantar fasciitis is pain with the first several steps of the morning. The pain often decreases through the day and then increases again near the end of your work day and at night. A diagnosis of a heel spur can be a result of tightness of the plantar fascia.

Some of the symptoms you may experience are pain with the first several steps in the morning, aching, soreness, burning, numbness, stiffness, and a general feeling of tightness across the foot. Frequently, pushing on the arch and the heel will be tender.

So, if this sounds familiar - what do you do?

Stretching, strengthening, and massaging of the foot and calf have been shown to

reduce the pain of plantar fasciitis. To stretch your calf, place the ball of your foot on a step and let your heels drop. Always hold on for balance. Stretching on a slant board provides a very good stretch. You can make or buy a slant board.



Rolling the arch of your foot over a tennis ball massages the tight, tender muscle tissue. After using the tennis ball for a while, progress to using a golf ball to concentrate the force to a smaller area. Using the tennis or golf ball can help decrease the tightness and tenderness of the plantar fascia.

Strengthening exercises of towel curls, toe taps, picking up marbles and coins with your toes strengthens the small muscles of the foot. To perform a towel curl, take your shoe and sock off and place a hand towel in front of you. Keep your heel on the floor and pull the towel with your toes toward your heel. To do a toe tap, all of the toes are lifted off the floor, keeping your heel on the floor, with the outside toes held in the air; tap the big toe to the floor. Then shift so you keep the big toe in the air and tap the four small toes. Picking up marbles (easier) and coins (harder) also work these small muscles.

Both the stretching and strengthening exercises are not difficult and can be done under your desk, or while standing in the kitchen. You could keep a golf ball at work and use it through the day.

If your pain is intense, has lasted greater than four weeks, or doesn't feel better after trying these exercises for three to four days you should see a physician to see what additional treatment can be provided. Physical therapy can provide heat, ultrasound, infrared treatment, and manual techniques which provide good results for cases that don't resolve with a home program.

### HELP FOR DIABETIC FEET

Do you or someone you know have diabetes? One of

the terrible side effects of diabetes is a loss of sensation, referred to as diabetic neuropathy. Symptoms can be experienced in the feet and hands and include pain, numbness, tingling, and a loss of sensation to light touch, vibration, and temperature. It would be like walking around with a pair of shoes that are two sizes too big and wearing three extra pairs of socks. This would make walking a difficult experience.

The sensory loss associated with diabetes is thought to be progressive and irreversible. As these symptoms progress, the loss of sensation increases the risk for falls, leg ulcers, and lower extremity amputations.

There is a new treatment called Anodyne. (This is for all you science nuts.) Anodyne delivers a monochromatic infrared irradiation which liberates the nitric oxide from hemoglobin creating an increase in circulation to the involved body part resulting in a return of sensation. Another way to say this is: infrared light helps improve circulation which is helping people get their sensation back! People who have received Anodyne therapy have less pain and increased sensation, thus reducing their risk of falling. They also experience fewer leg ulcers resulting in fewer leg amputations. If you or someone you know is interested in knowing more about the Anodyne treatment please call to have your questions answered.

**Des Peres Physical Therapy**  
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Touted by physicians as one of the best physical therapists in St. Louis, Deb Lavender is a physical therapist with over 25 years of experience providing hands-on or manual therapy. Her vast experience has allowed her to develop special skills in neck and low back pain, plantar fasciitis, frozen shoulder, joint replacement, and women's health issues (such as pain with pregnancy, pelvic floor pain, urinary incontinence, and osteoporosis). She owns Des Peres Physical Therapy in Des Peres and accepts all insurances.