

Watch for Heel Pain After Coming Out of Hibernation

After a long winter, nothing beats going outside for a walk or run to enjoy the warm spring weather. However, sudden increased activity following several months of low or no activity can result in heel pain, also known as plantar fasciitis.

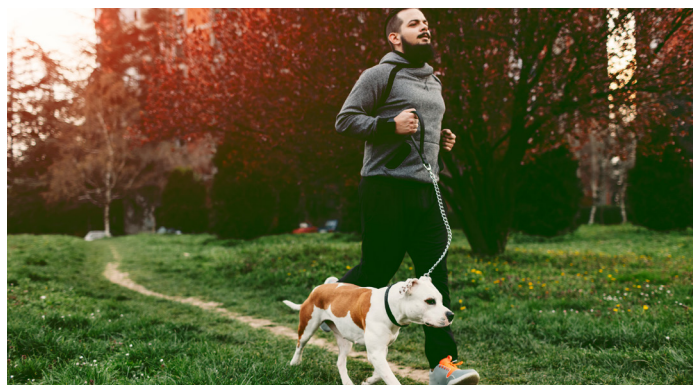
This painful condition results from inflammation of the tissue band (the plantar fascia) that extends from the heel to the toes. Repetitive activities, such as a new exercise routine or walking on a daily basis, can put stress and strain on the ligaments in the foot, leading to inflammation and pain.

The good news is heel pain can usually be relieved using conservative methods, but it must be treated early.

Heel pain can become chronic and debilitating if not cared for properly.

Foot and ankle surgeons can help you find relief with therapies, such as:

- anti-inflammatory medications
- stretching exercises
- orthotic devices
- physical therapy
- footwear modifications
- activity limitations



Although most patients with plantar fasciitis respond to nonsurgical treatment, some require surgery. If you continue to have heel pain with nonsurgical treatment, your foot and ankle surgeon can discuss your surgical options.

Heel pain should not stop you from taking in the beauty of spring. If you are experiencing heel pain, visit foothealthfacts.org to find a foot and ankle surgeon in your area who can help you resume a healthy and active lifestyle.

Keep Kids' Feet & Ankles Safe During Spring Sports

Competitive youth sports often require many athletes to transition from winter activities to spring activities without considering the increased risk of incurring a foot or ankle injury. Moving from indoor to outdoor playing surfaces with varying impact can stress a young athlete's feet and ankles, and going from sport to sport without allowing time for the muscles and bones to rest can cause overuse injuries.

If your child plans to participate in a sport this spring after playing through the winter sports season, follow these six tips:

- 1. Get a preseason health and wellness checkup.** A medical evaluation before the season starts can help identify any health concerns that could possibly lead to injury.
- 2. Take it slow.** Ask the coach to gradually increase children's playing time during practice and to avoid pushing them full throttle. Your child's feet and ankles need to become accustomed to the activity level required for the sport.
- 3. Wear proper, broken-in shoes.** Different sports require different shoe gear. Wearing the appropriate, well-fitting, broken-in athletic shoes can eliminate heel and toe discomfort.

- 4. Check your child's technique.** Watch for any changes in your child's form or technique. Ask the coach to notify you if your child is placing more weight on one side of the body or is limping.

- 5. Insist on open communication if your child has pain.**

Express to your child athlete that s/he should inform you and the coach of any pain or discomfort as soon as it occurs.

Overuse injuries, such as Achilles tendonitis and shin splints, can be subtle and can develop over time.

- 6. If an injury occurs, remember RICE.** An injured foot or ankle can often be healed with rest, ice, compression and elevation (RICE). If your child complains of foot or ankle pain, s/he should take a break from playing and allow time for recovery.



Foot Fractures Can Signal Osteoporosis



Unexplained foot pain or foot fracture can actually be an early sign of osteoporosis, a bone-thinning disease that weakens bones and can lead to fractures or breaks.

Osteoporosis often progresses without any symptoms or is not diagnosed until a person experiences pain from a bone fracture. Bones with osteoporosis are in a weakened state, and normal weightbearing actions, such as walking, can cause the bones in the foot to break. Many of the patients who visit a foot and ankle surgeon for foot pain find out they actually have a hairline break in the bone (stress fracture), without having experienced an injury.

While osteoporosis is most commonly seen in women over age 50, younger people and men are also affected. Early symptoms

and swelling on the top of the foot.

If you are living with osteoporosis, it is important to protect your feet from stress fractures. Foot and ankle surgeons recommend the following to keep your feet safe and comfortable:

- 1. Wear shoes designed for the exercise or sport.** Athletic shoes that support your arch and cushion the heel are the best to wear. Custom orthotics may also help provide extra support and shock absorption.
- 2. Start new workouts gradually.** Be sure to stretch or warm up for your workout and start new exercise routines gradually. Increase your exercise intensity by only 10 percent each week. If your feet get sore, use rest, ice, compression and elevation (RICE).
- 3. Protect your feet from bacteria.** Sweaty shoes and public showers at the gym are breeding grounds for bacteria, including resistant strains like MRSA. Never go barefoot while in public areas, and be sure to cover cuts and cracks in the skin or ingrown toenails to help keep out germs. If you have a cut or scrape that becomes infected and does not heal in a timely manner, call your foot and ankle surgeon to have it examined.

If you are suffering from unexplained foot pain, schedule an appointment with your foot and ankle surgeon. To find one in your area, visit FootHealthFacts.org.

Take the Foot Push-Up Test

How well are your arches performing? [Take the test to find out!](#)

1. In bare feet, stand facing your kitchen counter.
2. Place your palms on the counter with slight pressure.
3. Stand with your back straight, and lift one foot off the floor.
4. Slowly lift the heel of the other foot, placing all of your weight onto the ball of your foot.
5. Slowly lower your heel back to the floor.
6. Do 10 foot push-ups.

[Repeat steps 1 - 6 with the other foot.](#)



Did you have problems doing just one push-up?

If you cannot rise up onto the ball of your foot without putting a lot of pressure on your hands, leaning over the counter or experiencing pain, your arch may have a mechanical problem. The arch tendon can stretch or rupture, leading to lowering of the arch. Contact your foot and ankle surgeon as soon as possible for an evaluation.

Were you able to do all 10 without a problem?

If you can easily rise up onto the ball of your foot but have difficulty performing all 10 repetitions, you may be suffering from arch fatigue. Exercises focusing on strengthening and stretching the leg muscles will help this problem. The foot push-up described above can also be used as an exercise technique.

Did you have pain in your arch during the exercise?

If you can easily rise up onto the ball of your foot but experience pain in your arch, your arch may be inflamed and may have been overworked. Schedule an appointment with your foot and ankle surgeon so s/he can manage the problem and help keep your feet healthy and pain-free.

For more foot and ankle health information or to find a foot and ankle surgeon near you, visit FootHealthFacts.org.

