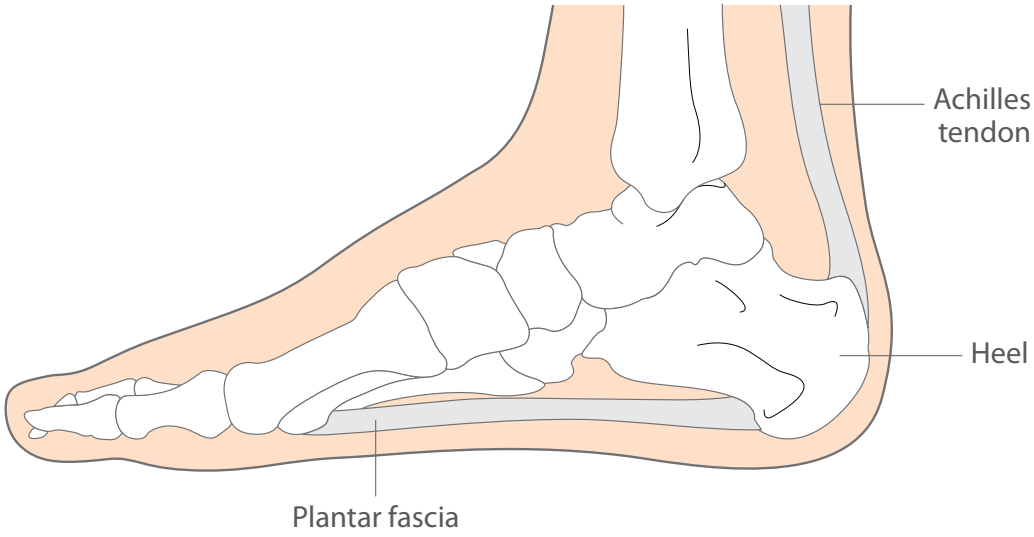
Arthritis Research UK

Information and exercise sheet

Plantar fasciitis

Inflammation of the instep tendons



Your heel pain is caused by a traction injury with some inflammation of the tissues of the heel and the underside of the foot. Usually patients have a flat foot, i.e. loss of the instep (long arch of the foot). The treatment is aimed at relieving your pain and restoring this arch.

Patients often find that trainers or similar shoes give most relief. These shoes are shock-absorbing and have an arch support. You have been supplied with a pair of Sorbothane arch supports with heel pads (cushioning insoles). These should be transferred to all your shoes/boots – even your slippers. If you have a problem with only one heel please use both insoles. Please do not walk around in bare feet.

It is important to do stretching exercises for both your Achilles tendon and your plantar fascia. Please try to perform the exercises overleaf at least twice a day as this will speed the healing process and reduce the pain more quickly.

(continued overleaf)

This 'Information and exercise sheet' can be downloaded from the Arthritis Research UK website: **www.arthritisresearchuk.org/infoandexercisesheets**.

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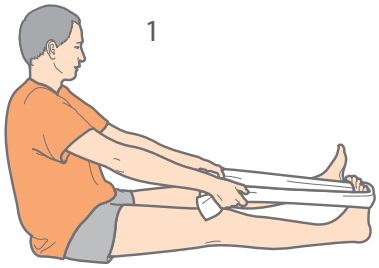
Exercises

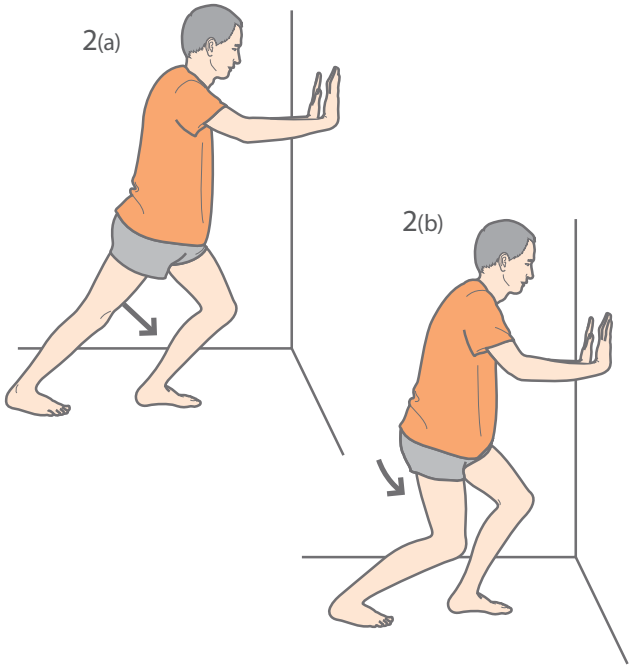
1. Achilles tendon and plantar fascia stretch

First thing in the morning, loop a towel, a piece of elastic or a Tubigrip™ around the ball of your foot and, keeping your knee straight, pull your toes towards your nose, holding for 30 seconds. Repeat 3 times for each foot.



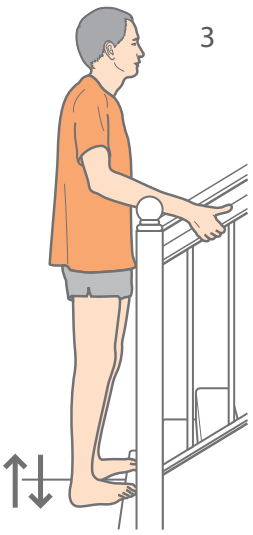
2. Wall push-ups or stretches for Achilles tendon

The Achilles tendon comes from the muscles at the back of your thigh and your calf muscles. These exercises need to be performed first with the knee straight and then with the knee bent in order to stretch both parts of the Achilles tendon. Twice a day do the following wall push-ups or stretches: (a) Face the wall, put both hands on the wall at shoulder height, and stagger the feet (one foot in front of the other). The front foot should be approximately 30 cm (12 inches) from the wall. With the front knee bent and the back knee straight, lean into the stretch (i.e. towards the wall) until a tightening is felt in the calf of the back leg, and then ease off. Repeat 10 times. (b) Now repeat this exercise but bring the back foot forward a little so that the back knee is slightly bent. Repeat the push-ups 10 times.



3. Stair stretches for Achilles tendon and plantar fascia

Holding the stair-rail for support, with legs slightly apart, position the feet so that both heels are off the end of the step. Lower the heels, keeping the knees straight, until a tightening is felt in the calf. Hold this position for 20–60 seconds and then raise the heels back to neutral. Repeat 6 times, at least twice a day.



4. Dynamic stretches for plantar fascia

This involves rolling the arch of the foot over a rolling pin, a drinks can or a tennis ball etc, while either standing (holding the back of a chair for support) or sitting. Allow the foot and ankle to move in all directions over the object. This can be done for a few minutes until there is some discomfort. Repeat this exercise at least twice a day. The discomfort can be relieved by rolling the foot on a cool drinks can from the fridge.