



Dr Kade Paterson  
PhD, B.Pod., B.App.Sci.(Hons), M.A.Pod.A  
Sports Podiatrist  
Lakeside Sports Medicine Centre  
Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre  
Aughtie Dve, Albert Park 3206  
[kadepaterson@lakesidesmc.com.au](mailto:kadepaterson@lakesidesmc.com.au)  
Phone: 9682 6029

## Heel and Arch Pain

The most common complaint in the foot is pain in the heel or arch region. Here we'll discuss the common causes and symptoms of heel pain, as well as some simple and effective treatments you can do at home.

### *Causes*

Most people who experience heel pain report symptoms directly under the heel bone, and/or sometimes a little further forward into the arch. It is often inaccurately referred to as "heel spur syndrome", however, we now know that in the vast majority of cases a heel spur is rarely the problem. In fact, about 30% of us have a spur that doesn't cause any troubles. By far the major cause of pain in this area is inflammation of the plantar fascia, hence the name of the condition: plantar fasciitis.

The main fibres of the plantar fascia attach to the base of the heel bone. They then run along the arch of the foot and insert under the big toe. Its job is to support the arch, but when there's too much pull on the fascia, minor tears can form. These are usually directly under the heel where it attaches (hence the site of pain), although we also can see it in the arch, and rarely, towards the front of the foot.

### *Symptoms*

Symptoms of plantar fasciitis are commonly much worse when we first get out of bed and take our first steps of the day. The pain often then eases after walking for a little while, and can then return towards the end of the day, or upon standing after sitting down for some time. The pain can also get worse after extended periods of exercise such as running or aerobics.

**Ph:** (03) 9682 6029 **Fax:** (03) 9682 9278 **Address:** MSAC Box 7 Aughtie Drive, Albert Park Vic 3206

**Web:** [www.lakesidesmc.com.au](http://www.lakesidesmc.com.au) ABN 8950 3418 696

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## ***Treatment***

Most cases of plantar fasciitis respond well to basic forms of therapy such as stretching, ice and rest. Here are some simple things you can try:

- Before you first get out of bed and step on the foot in the morning, stretch the plantar fascia by pulling the toes towards the shin. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds and repeat 10 times. You can also do this at other times during the day (the more the better!).
- Freeze a small soft drink bottle filled with water. Three times a day, take it out of the freezer, place it on the ground, and using some pressure, roll the painful spot back and forward over the bottle. Do this for 15-20 minutes – never longer and never more than once per hour.
- Whenever you get a chance, take your shoe off and roll your foot over a tennis ball using some pressure.
- Ease off any heavy weight-bearing activities until symptoms ease. Substitute for activities that don't stress the plantar fascia, such as cycling and swimming.

Our Podiatrist, Dr Kade Paterson, is an expert in the assessment of foot and leg biomechanics and the treatment and prevention of foot and lower leg injuries. If your symptoms don't improve, or if you would like more information on heel or other forms of foot pain, come down and see us on the ground floor at MSAC, or book an appointment on 1300 855 442. We offer ALL MSAC gym and MSAC club members 5-10% off podiatry, physiotherapy and myotherapy consultations.