

Getting to the Root of Heel Pain



A debilitating condition for many patients, heel pain impacts nearly 2 million Americans. The pain often strikes from the moment they get out of bed and stays with them throughout the day.

“There are 72 diagnoses that produce heel pain similar to plantar fasciitis.”

The National Institute of Health states heel pain is not often caused by the result of a single injury but the result of excessive or repetitive heel pounding. Heel pain is commonly associated with plantar fasciitis. But many of those diagnosed with plantar fasciitis may have a different issue.

According to foot and ankle expert, Josh Bailey, PT, DPT, OCS, CSCS, CPed only 10 to 15 percent of the patients diagnosed with plantar fasciitis actually have the condition. Many of those diagnosed with plantar fasciitis actually have one of 72 conditions that produce heel pain similar to plantar fasciitis. Each condition requires a different method of treatment.

Plantar fasciitis is caused by inflammation of the thick connective tissue connecting the heel to the sole of the foot. The pain is often worse in the morning due to the foot becoming stiff overnight and pain is often felt in arch instead of the heel.

Another common cause of heel pain is heel pain syndrome. This condition is more chronic in nature and forms over years. Unlike plantar fasciitis, it is not caused by inflammation. Rolling the foot over an ice bottle can be beneficial for those with true plantar fasciitis and do nothing for a patient with heel pain syndrome.

Since treatment for each diagnosis are different, Dr. Bailey encourages physical therapists to take the time to do their own evaluation when a patient walks into their clinic with a plantar fasciitis diagnosis. He suggests investigating the reasons why the pain developed. Is the pain

“Using the right modality can help reduce heel pain and improve patient outcomes .”

due to abnormal use of a shoe, biomechanical limitations or recent stress on the foot? Does the pain increase when a patient extends his toes? If so, the pain is likely caused by plantar fasciitis. If not, another condition may be causing the pain.

True plantar fasciitis will heal regardless of treatment. Dr. Bailey states some patients recover on their own in as little as 6 months while others take 3 years before symptoms go away. A physical therapist can help speed the recovery. Many patients often see a significant reduction in their symptoms within 6 visits.

Since heel pain syndrome is more chronic in nature, a physical therapist can help reduce the pain and symptoms associated with the condition.

Learn more ways to effectively address heel pain by listening to the PT Talker podcast featuring Joshua Bailey, PT, DPT, OCS, CSCS, CPed, co-owner, president and chief clinical officer for Rehabilitation Associates of Central Virginia.



About the Author

After helping design and market the first preventative knee brace for football players as an Athletic Trainer at Iowa State University in the late 1970's, Jeff has made physical therapy equipment his passion since 1986. He launched Advantage Medical in 1994 with a commitment to help Physical Therapists and rehab professionals improve clinical outcomes as well as save time and costs through pioneering, creative solutions. Jeff's entrepreneurial approach keeps Advantage Medical and its clients at the forefront of innovations and best practices in the PT industry.

Jeff was also one of four original founders of the National Medical Alliance in 1988 which later changed its name to Motion1. He served as the Chief Operating Officer for 10 years and was instrumental in its growth and reputation as a leading supplier to independent rehabilitation distributors across the country. He is also the host of the long running podcast "PT Talker" featuring a physical therapy expert for listeners every week. Subscribe to the free, informative broadcast designed to help therapists grow their business at www.PTTalker.com

About Advantage Medical

Advantage Medical was established in 1994 to meet the growing needs of rehab professionals in a variety of medical disciplines. Advantage Medical has become a leading provider of expert advice as well as quality therapy equipment and supplies, offering innovative solutions to challenges faced by physical therapists, clinic directors, chiropractors, athlete trainers and other medical professionals.

In October of 2010, Advantage Medical joined the family of Scrip Companies of Bolingbrook, IL as an operating division. Now with access to a wider variety of products and large scale purchasing power, Advantage Medical is poised to raise the level of value we bring to our clients. Scrip Companies serves markets in massage therapy, chiropractic, spa and now physical therapy.

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