

TOE FLEXORS AND PLANTAR FASCIA

Why stretch the toes and sole of foot?

Heel pain and/or plantar fasciitis are common foot ailments. They are sometimes one and the same problem, though heel pain can come from various other causes. The plantar fascia is a fibrous band of tissue that attaches from the under side of the heel to the ball of the foot. It helps support the arch of the foot and helps absorb the shock of forces transmitted from the ground to the leg. The plantar side (under side) of the foot also contains toe flexors and other foot muscles. Trigger points or knots in these muscles and inflammation of the plantar fascia can contribute to heel or plantar foot pain. Massaging and stretching these body tissues can be helpful in restoring pain-free function.

How to stretch

- Sit on a chair.
- Rest your right ankle on left thigh.
- Reach for your toes with right hand.
- With palm on under side of toes, pull up on toes to stretch the toe flexors and fascia under foot
- Hold stretch for 30 to 60 seconds.
- Repeat for other side.



Alternate Stretch

The following exercise is good to do prior to or instead of the plantar fascia and toe flexor stretch.

Sit in a chair. Place your bare foot on a tennis ball and roll the ball from the heel to the toes and back again to the heel. Repeat for two to three minutes. Cover the entire sole of the foot by moving the ball a little to the side with each pass. Roll the ball slowly and with firm pressure.

To release myofascial trigger points, you can linger on the tender spots to wait for a release or softening of the tender points. Stop on a tender point and breathe slow and deep while applying constant pressure. If the discomfort subsides you can press a little more, then wait for another release. It may take up to 90 seconds or more for a softening or decrease in tenderness to occur. Move on to the next most tender point. Release as many points as you wish in the same manner.

Be patient. Work on this daily for a few minutes. Start with mild to moderate pressure. In time you will tolerate firmer pressure. You may progress to using firmer and or smaller balls to achieve deeper or more concentrated releases.



Some people use golf balls or rolling pins for this exercise.

Disclaimer:

Suggestions made in this publication are no substitute for medical advice. If you have any pain or difficulty performing the described stretches, seek advice from your appropriate health professional.

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