



Getting back on your feet

Preventing and treating heel pain from plantar fasciitis

TEXT BY CATHLEEN COLE

Evan Merrill, a doctor of podiatric medicine in Medford and a marathon runner, knows firsthand about the pain plantar fasciitis causes. “I’ve had it about two years,” he says, noting that the condition came from overuse caused by overtraining for a 31-mile trail run.

Although runners and other athletes tend to be more at risk for plantar fasciitis, the pain and swelling in the plantar fascia can knock just about anyone off his or her feet.

Plantar fasciitis

Plantar fasciitis is pain and inflammation of the plantar fascia, a thick, fibrous tissue that attaches to the heel bone, spans across the bottom of the foot and attaches to the back of the toes. It acts like a bowstring to maintain the arch of the foot. The condition causes stabbing pain in the arch and heel, especially when you first get out of bed in the morning.

That’s because the plantar fascia and calf muscles shorten and tighten when at rest. When your feet hit the floor after sleeping, micro tears in the fascia occur and become inflamed. This can also occur after long periods of standing or sitting. The process is ongoing injury from micro tears and ongoing pain from the inflammation. “It’s constantly being torn and partly healed,” Merrill explains. “It’s going back and forth.”

What causes plantar fasciitis in the first place? There can be several contributing factors including flat (pronated) or high-arched feet, poor shoe support or shoes that are too short, walking or running uphill, walking or running on soft terrain such as sand, increasing age, sudden weight gain, tight calf muscles, overuse and trauma.

Tom Kalivas, owner of Paradise Footwear in Medford, is a certified pedorthist – a specialist in using footwear including shoes, shoe modifications, orthotics and other devices to prevent or alleviate foot problems. He has training in the biomechanics of the lower extremities focusing on the foot and ankle. His clients usually already have problems when they come to his store seeking help, and the No. 1 problem is plantar fasciitis.

Treatment

If you have any type of foot pain, it's important to take care of it immediately, Kalivas advises, because foot pain usually doesn't go away on its own. Merrill agrees, warning athletes to never try to run through the pain and to stop activity immediately.

If foot pain strikes, take a break from your physical activity to rest your feet. Try over-the-counter non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. Stretch your calf muscles several times a day to keep them loose. Applying ice to your feet for about 10 minutes at a time a few times a day helps reduce inflammation. Don't go barefoot, especially when you get out of bed in the morning. Keep a pair of supportive sandals by your bed. Always wear shoes with good arch support, and add semi-rigid, over-the-counter orthotics if necessary.

If treating yourself at home doesn't work, it's time to see a doctor who might prescribe a stronger prescription NSAID. A cortisone injection in the heel can offer relief too. You'll still be advised to keep up with the icing and stretching. If over-the-counter inserts aren't cutting it, your podiatrist can get you custom orthotics.

continued on page 18

PLANTAR FASCIITIS CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- Flat (pronated) feet
- High-arched feet
- Poor shoe support
- Shoes that are too short
- Walking or running uphill
- Walking or running on soft terrain (sand)
- Increasing age
- Sudden weight gain
- Tight calf muscles
- Overuse, overtraining
- Trauma



At Medford Food Co-op, fresh, delicious food is just the beginning. Co+op, stronger together.



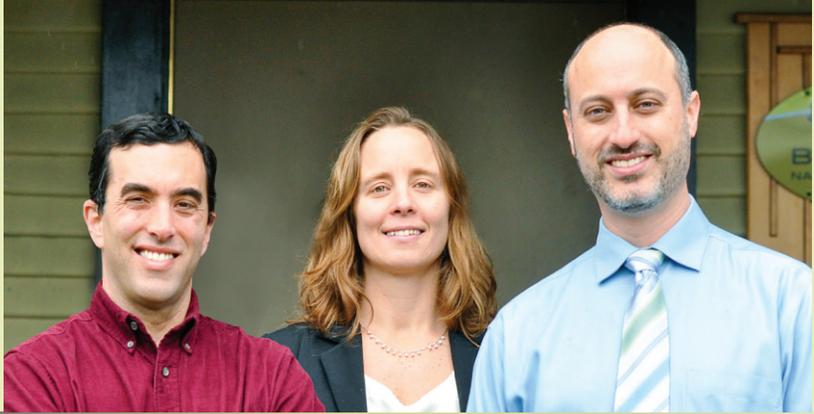
Medford Food Co-op

Your Local Grocery

945 S Riverside • 541.779.2667 • daily 8 to 8

MF-659058

Bear Creek Naturopathic Clinic
welcomes
Dr. Angela Carlson, ND



Dr. Carlson is a primary care physician specializing in women's health, gastrointestinal conditions, and autoimmune conditions. She strives to empower each patient to take an active role in their health and offers thoughtful guidance on their journey towards optimal health.

Call today to schedule a FREE 15-minute consultation.

BEAR CREEK NATUROPATHIC CLINIC

1012 E. Jackson St.
Medford, OR 97504
541.770.5563
www.bearcreekclinic.com

MF-660083

"It can take up to four to six months for the pain to resolve," Merrill says. "You have to hit it from all areas." After six months of treatment with no considerable relief, surgery could be considered. "If all else fails, a surgical option is available," he notes.

Prevention

"Footwear is your most important equipment when you're a runner or a walker," Kalivas emphasizes. Merrill concurs. "Good shoes are essential to help avoid plantar fasciitis and other foot problems," he says.

If you're starting an exercise program, start out slowly and always do your stretches, Merrill recommends. Kalivas advises runners to replace their shoes about every 400 miles to protect their feet, knees and hips. That usually works out to be about every three months for marathon runners. "Don't let your shoes wear out," Merrill warns. "Shoes are cheap when compared to foot surgery." ■

IF THE SHOE FITS

Properly fitting shoes with good arch support are must-haves for healthy feet. Here are a few brands Merrill and Kalivas recommend in no particular order of merit:

- Asics
- Brooks
- Dansko
- Easy Spirit
- Ecco
- Hoka One One
- New Balance
- Rockport
- SAS (San Antonio Shoemakers)
- Saucony
- Vionic



It's time again for this year's

Oregon Healthy Living



This is your chance to help pick Southern Oregon's favorite places to eat, shop and live healthy.

Participate today to determine the best of the best in Fitness Favorites, Healthy Services, Healthy Shopping and Healthy Eats

It's as easy as **1, 2, 3!**

- ① Go to www.mailtribune.com/HealthyPicks from now through Friday, April 17th and nominate your favorite business for each category.
- ② Next, after the nominations are tallied it's time to cast your vote for the top five nominations in each category from Wednesday, April 22nd through Wednesday May 6th. To vote for the finalists go to www.mailtribune.com/HealthyPicks.
- ③ Read the special Readers' Healthy Picks edition of Oregon Healthy Living on Sunday, July 5th to see who you, the readers, have selected as your healthy choices for 2015!



Nominate and vote for our local businesses for a chance to win 1 of 9 gift certificates for the top 3 businesses in the Restaurant, Spas and Grocery categories!

To make nominations, cast your votes and for up to date information and contest rules visit www.mailtribune.com/HealthyPicks



MF-651321