

Exercises for Plantar Fasciitis

"ABC" exercises: General exercise helps strengthen the foot. Most of us don't exercise the bottom muscles in our feet and just run on them and pound them with countless hours of cardio. Simply sit down and prop up your lower leg on a foot stool. Using your big toe as the lead, begin by making the letter "A" in the air as large as you can without moving the rest of your leg. Continue until you have made all the letters in the alphabet. Time and progressively challenge yourself by trying to complete the alphabet three times in less time, but with the same amount of foot movement.

Foot grip strength: Begin by placing a towel on a smooth, flat surface, like a hardwood floor. Place your heel on the towel and make sure your toes are free to move. Use your toes to grip the towel and pull it toward your heel. Once you have bound up the towel, reverse the direction and push the towel away from your heel. If you have a carpeted floor, you can work the foot by picking up a towel or some tissue paper with your foot, then dropping it and repeating the exercise. These exercises are all designed to work the muscles in the bottom of your foot and promote improved blood supply and muscle tone.

Running/walking grip: This is a simple concept that involves learning to gently grip the ground with your feet as you run or walk. The proper amount of tension is equal to that of a steady handshake; variations will help keep your foot from cramping. This helps promote plantar muscle tone and is a must for anyone with flat feet.

Hamstring stretches: Very commonly the rear of the legs are stretched by bending forward and touching the toes. If you are over age 65 or get dizzy, then elevate the foot to about knee height with the leg straight and then bend forward and hold for 10, 15, and then 30 seconds. Several studies have shown that tight hamstrings result in back pain and also PF.