Foot Pain

Understanding symptoms, treatment and recovery

Foot Pain

A guide to symptoms, treatment and recovery



Understanding foot pain

Foot pain is discomfort or aching anywhere in the foot. It can result from injury, overuse, poor footwear, or underlying medical conditions.

Supporting your recovery

Supportive footwear, changes to painful activities and exercises tailored to your symptoms may help. A physiotherapist can advise on your recovery.

Causes and symptoms

Understanding what may be contributing to your pain

Common causes

- Plantar fasciitis - pain in the heel or arch
- Arthritis - joint inflammation, often in older adults
- Bunions - bony bump at the base of the big toe
- Flat feet / high arches - abnormal foot mechanics
- Sprains and strains - ligament or muscle injuries
- Tendonitis - inflamed tendons

Who may be affected?

- People who stand or walk for long periods
- Older adults with wear and tear or arthritis
- Runners or active individuals
- People with obesity or poorly fitting shoes

Common symptoms

- Pain in the heel, arch, toes, or top of the foot
- Swelling or tenderness
- Stiffness or difficulty moving the foot
- Pain that worsens during activity
- Redness or warmth in some cases

Important information

- Pain does not improve after 2-3 weeks
- Swelling, bruising, or deformity
- Difficulty walking or performing daily activities
- Pain that is persistent or worsening

Recovery outlook

Most foot pain improves with appropriate care over a few weeks to months. Early treatment and consistent exercises help prevent long-term problems.

Exercises and rehabilitation

Gentle movements under professional guidance

Exercise examples

Ask your physiotherapist which exercises are suitable for you. Use controlled movements and work within comfort.



Exercise instructions

1. Calf Stretch: Lean against a wall, one leg back, heel on floor, hold 20-30 seconds, repeat 3 times
2. Plantar Fascia Stretch: Sit, cross affected leg, pull toes toward shin, hold 15-30 seconds, repeat 3 times
3. Foot Strengthening: Towel scrunches or picking up marbles with toes

Recovery guidance

Most foot pain improves with appropriate care over a few weeks to months. Early treatment and consistent exercises help prevent long-term problems.

Management and next steps

Self-care, treatment and when to seek help

Self-care and home management

- Rest - reduce activities that worsen pain
- Ice therapy - 10-15 minutes, 2-3 times daily
- Footwear - wear supportive shoes with cushioning
- Stretching - calf and plantar fascia stretches
- Foot supports / orthotics - to reduce pressure on painful areas
- Pain relief - paracetamol or NSAIDs if safe for you

Treatment physiotherapists may offer

- Hands-on treatment: massage, mobilization, stretching
- Exercise programs for strengthening and flexibility
- Advice on footwear, orthotics, and activity modification
- Taping or supportive devices for pain relief and protection

Questions or concerns?

- Pain does not improve after 2-3 weeks
- Swelling, bruising, or deformity
- Difficulty walking or performing daily activities
- Pain that is persistent or worsening

References

- NHS - Foot Pain: www.nhs.uk/conditions/foot-pain
- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy - Foot & Ankle Guidance

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