



Heel Pain

Heel pain is the most common problem affecting the foot and ankle. Every mile that the average person walks places 60 tons of stress on each foot. The repetitive pounding, running or playing on hard surfaces, or wearing improper shoes irritates the sensitive tissue in the feet. Most people ignore the pain and continue their activity which increases the problem from a simple pain that can be relieved with rest to a much more complicated chronic problem. Heel pain is caused from a variety of reasons, usually related to repetitive impact that wears on the foot. If the heel does hurt, see a physician immediately to determine the cause of the injury and the proper treatment. Heel pain is usually located in one of two places: behind the heel and beneath the heel.

If the pain is behind the heel, the Achilles tendon is suspect to some sort of irritation whether it is Achilles tendonitis, bursitis, a bone spur or a combination of these. Signs of this problem are thickening of the skin behind the heel, redness and swelling. A tender bump may also begin to develop along with a warm sensation to the touch.

Pain beneath the heel can also come from one or more causes. A stone bruise is caused from stepping on a hard object such as a rock or a stone which bruises the fat pad on the bottom of the heel. Plantar fasciitis is another pain beneath the heel caused from excessive running or jumping that inflames the tissue running from the back of the heel to the base of the toes. Sign of this injury consist of flare-ups early in the morning when taking the first few steps, until the tissue loosens up. A heel spur is the last cause of an injury beneath the heel. A spur is calcification of bone that protrudes into the soft tissue causing irritation. The spur is visible on x-ray and is treated like most other heel problems with rest from activity, stretching and possible heel pad inserts. Ice and anti-inflammatory medications will help control swelling and inflammation.

Highlights:

- Rest is the best treatment.
- Surgery is rarely needed.
- Do not ignore heel pain because it can lead to a chronic problem which is harder to fix and can lead to worse problems.

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