



FOOT CARE GUIDE

TO PREVENT OR MANAGE FOOT INJURIES

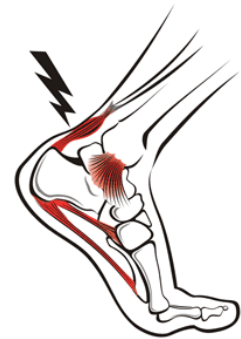
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Normal Arch



Flat Arch



ATTENTION:

The enclosed information is provided as a resource in considering alternative ways to manage foot discomfort that often results from prolonged standing and walking on hard surfaces, changes in foot dynamics and mechanics, wearing inappropriate foot wear with inadequate support or other reasons.

If you have never exercised before or have concerns about your ability to perform stretches or an exercise program, consult with your doctor regarding the enclosed information. It is not intended to replace your doctor's advice, but can be used as a tool for you to manage your discomfort. The booklet includes self-care instructions including stretching, alternative shoes, insoles, and various therapeutic solutions. These are to be used at your own discretion for self-care. The purchase of these items would be determined on a case by case basis depending on your situation. Selection of alternative footwear may require permission from your department if a uniform code applies. Some footwear and/or devices may also require a medical prescription from your doctor.

Additional information can be found on the web by referencing the websites noted in this guide.

The County of Monterey does not endorse the products in this catalogue in any way.

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SELF- CARE STRATEGIES FOR EARLY SYMPTOM MANAGEMENT

The following tips may assist you in managing your pain and discomfort as it occurs at work and home. The tips are geared toward self care including using foot orthotics, ice technique and over the counter medication use. If you are currently receiving medical care, we encourage you to review these guidelines with your healthcare provider. If you are doing self-care, select the tips that will best help you and evaluate each for its benefit to you after trying the suggestion. If your pain worsens, seek medical advice.

Foot Orthotics:

Orthotics (also known as orthotic insoles, shoe inserts, or orthoses) are devices placed inside the shoes with the purpose of restoring our natural foot function. This is necessary when the natural biomechanical balance of our lower body has been disrupted by over-pronation. Many common complaints such as [heel pain](#), knee pain and lower back pain are caused by poor foot biomechanics. Biomechanics is the science that studies the body's movements during walking, running and sports. The most common form of bad foot biomechanics is over-pronation, which is the dropping of the arches and rolling inwards of the feet and ankles, and affects an estimated 70% of the population. Orthotic insoles correct over-pronation and realign the foot and ankle bones to their neutral position, restoring natural foot function. In turn, this will help alleviate problems not only in the feet, but also in other parts of the body, such as the knees, hips, and lower back. There are many types of over the counter orthotics as well as custom orthotics. Your healthcare provider should assist you in identifying what will work best for you. For more information about orthotics, visit <http://www.footminders.com/what-are-orthotics.html> .

Ice Technique:

Use ice to reduce inflammation, pain and spasms to the involved area. The following tips will help you to achieve maximum benefits with ice.

Types of Ice Packs:

1. Purchase a (blue) gel pack at the local drug store that is usually used for first aide. It should freeze soft and pliable. Keep this in your freezer ready for use.
2. Fill a ziplock bag with 1/3 rubbing alcohol and 2/3 water. It will freeze as a slush and be malleable to your body part.
3. A bag of frozen vegetables can work well as an ice pack.
4. Freeze water in a cup and put a popsickle stick in it for direct ice technique.

Application:

Ice packs should be applied to the involved area for at least 15-30 minutes/session. If you are sensitive to putting the pack directly to your skin, cover the pack with a thin towel (dish, wash cloth or small terri-cloth) to protect the skin. If the area is boney, you may want to cool it down slowly to improve the tolerance. Apply the ice in 15-second increments, on/off until the skin surface cools enough to leave the ice on. You can apply the ice on/off throughout the day in 15-30 minute increments. Ice packs are excellent for use on swollen, tight, spasmed muscles, trigger points or areas that are burning or very sore and achy.

To perform direct ice technique, use the freezer cup of ice and massage the ice over the involved area in circular or lateral strokes quickly for 5-7 minutes. Direct ice is excellent for acute and chronic tendinitis and directly applied to isolated trigger points to the neck and back areas.

Your Expectations:

Although ice can be uncomfortable to apply because it is cold, **it is one of the most effective methods to relieve acute and chronic pain (and swelling)**. It does not matter if the injury occurred today or 5 years ago, you can use it at any time. You will feel discomfort and possibly some pain the first 2-5 minutes of icing until the area is numb. After that, you should not feel discomfort. Check your skin after 5 minutes to be sure that it is bright pink. It should not turn white or be mottled. If it is, you have likely over cooled the skin. Some people are allergic to ice technique and develop a rash as a result of the ice. If this develops, discontinue use immediately.

You may want to heat the area. Heating may actually irritate the area and make it worse as it is already inflamed. A hot bath or soak is acceptable, followed by icing the area. You may also do contrast baths of hot water and ice water for 15-30 seconds each for about 10 minutes.

Medications:

Your doctor may have prescribed pain medication and anti-inflammatory for your condition. We encourage you to take them as prescribed. If you are managing your pain on your own, there are numerous over-the-counter medications that can be purchased today to relieve pain and inflammation. Some of these are Aleve, Ibuprofen, Motrin IB, etc. Be wary that these products can sometimes cause upset stomach, stomach bleeding and indigestion or constipation. If you have other medical problems, discuss these medications with your doctor before taking them.

Self-Care Routine:

If you have acute or chronic pain, it is critical that you be an active participant in your rehabilitation. There is no time to delay in applying these tips to manage your pain. If you wait, your pain will likely worsen. The sooner you intervene in your own care, the sooner you will be pain minimal or pain free. It is the person that practices good self-care and self-responsibility that minimizes their symptoms and resumes an active and healthy lifestyle with or without discomfort.

Your physician may have prescribed a variety of pain management strategies for you already. For additional self-care, begin with icing the area and an active stretching program combined with task interruption/rotation at work. Also, if you can obtain an ergonomic analysis of your work area, this may have significant benefit as well. If pain continues, progress by adding the medication and splinting. If you are not relieved with this routine within 2 weeks or a reasonable time frame, or your symptoms worsen, please seek medical advice. Do not delay any longer. When you see the physician, discuss your self-care routine with them.

For Healthcare Provider Use:

Special Instructions:

THE BENEFITS OF AN ACTIVE STRETCHING PROGRAM

Many feet related injuries such as heel tendonitis, heel spurs or other inflammatory soft tissue type injuries result from muscle imbalance or too much tightness in the muscle/tendon complex. Stretching is an important part of managing that tightness. Below are some guidelines for stretching the legs, ankles and feet.

STRETCHING: WHAT IS IT?

- *Stretching lengthens muscles and soft tissue.
- *Increases flexibility.
- *Reduces the likelihood of muscle strains and sprains.
- *Helps reduce muscle spasming.

SELF STRETCHING BEFORE WORK OR EXERCISE IS RECOMMENDED TO WARM UP THE BODY, MAKING YOU LESS PRONE TO INJURY.

- *Take at least 2 minutes to perform your stretching routine at the start of your shift.
- *Take advantage of your lunch or break time to re-stretch.
- *By taking a small amount of time to stretch out you will increase your productivity at work.
- *Stretching after work at home is a great way to reduce stress.

PROPER STRETCHING TECHNIQUE:

- *Perform each stretch 3-5 times each holding the desired position for 10-20 seconds.
- *Remember not to bounce.
- *Breathe deeply and relax.
- *Stretching can be slightly uncomfortable. Work slowly into the pulling sensation and let up slowly.
- *Stretch with good posture technique making sure the spine is maintained in neutral alignment.
- *Active range of motion exercises should be done up to 10 x and are not meant to be held as a stretch, but in some cases can act as a stretch.

Back in knots?



About.com: Physical Therapy

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Plantar Fascia Stretches

From Laura Inverarity, D.O., former About.com Guide

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Plantar fasciitis is an overuse injury caused by inflammation of the plantar fascia, a thick fibrous band that connects the heel bone to the base of the toes. Symptoms of plantar fasciitis include heel pain that is initially worse in the morning. Stretching the plantar fascia can help decrease the symptoms of plantar fasciitis.

Review these five stretches:

Long Sitting Stretch

- 1) Sit on the floor with your legs stretched out in front of you
- 2) Loop a towel around the top of your affected foot
- 3) Pull the towel towards you until a stretch is felt across the bottom of your foot
- 4) Hold for 30 seconds then relax - repeat 10 times

Achilles Stretch

- 1) Stand facing a wall and place your hands straight out on the wall
- 2) Step back with your affected foot keeping it flat on the floor
- 3) Move the other leg forward and slowly lean in toward the wall
- 4) Stop when you feel a stretch through the calf
- 5) Hold for 30 seconds then relax - repeat 10 times

Stair Stretch

- 1) Stand on a step on the balls for your feet
- 2) Hold the rail for balance
- 3) Slowly lower the heel of the injured foot until a stretch is felt
- 4) Hold for 30 seconds then relax - repeat 10 times

Can roll

- 1) Roll your injured foot (without a shoe on) back and forth from the tip of the toes to the heel over a can
- 2) Repeat ten times in both directions

Toe Stretch

- 1) Sit on the floor with your knee bent and foot flat on the floor
- 2) Pull the toes back on the injured foot until stretch across the arch is felt
- 3) Hold for 30 seconds then relax - repeat 10 times

Explore Physical Therapy

Must Reads

WEBSITE RESOURCES FOR BETTER FOOT CARE :

The following website resources may be helpful in managing your foot pain.

www.zcoil.com – unique shoes designed to reduce heel pressure and pain

www.megacomfort.com – shoe inserts

www.footsmart.com – lower body health catalogue including comfort shoes, socks and footcare.

<http://www.footminders.com/what-are-orthotics.html> - information about orthotics , why and how to use them