Plantar Heel Pain
Physiotherapy Information Sheet

What are the main symptoms?
Pain in the heel, across the sole of the foot (the part that touches the ground) and sometimes into the arch is the most common symptom.

Usually the pain comes on slowly and is worst when you first place weight on your foot, for example, when you get up in the morning or after long periods of sitting.

What causes Plantar heel pain?
A sudden change in activity levels can cause increased strain on the plantar fascia. Pain may also develop over a period of time due to increased stress on the foot or due to a recent changes in footwear.

You are more prone to Plantar fasciitis if:
- You are overweight
- You have a job that requires a lot of walking
- You have tight calf muscles
- You wear unsupportive shoes

What can I do?
Rest/modify activities. Reducing the load you put through the sole of your foot might be helpful. This can be done by modifying your daily activity and then slowly building it back up again. Use morning pain when getting out of bed as a marker.

Stretching. Improving the flexibility of your calf muscles can help. Stretching should not be painful. Your physiotherapist can advise on appropriate stretches and other important exercises.

Ice. Applying ice to the sole of the foot may provide pain relief. Use a round 500ml drinks bottle (plastic) and freeze it when ¾ full of water. Roll the foot over the bottle for 5 minutes. Do this everyday. Always check your skin for irritation.

Supportive shoes. Poor footwear has been found to contribute to plantar heel pain. Footwear should be supportive, not compress your feet too much, fit well and have cushioned soles, especially in the heel area. Sometimes insoles can be helpful in providing pain relief.

What happens next?
In the first instance you should give these first line treatments 12 weeks to have an effect. If you are getting improvement, you should continue these treatments until the symptoms have resolved. However, pain may be longstanding and can last for some years. The majority of pain does resolve within 3-6 months.

If you are not seeing improvement despite trialling the above you may benefit from seeing a Physiotherapist or having a review with your Doctor.

For more information please visit www.ecch.org.
If you would like this leaflet in large print, audio cassette, Braille or in a different language please contact Andrea Dawson on 01502 718600.