

# Painful Flat Foot

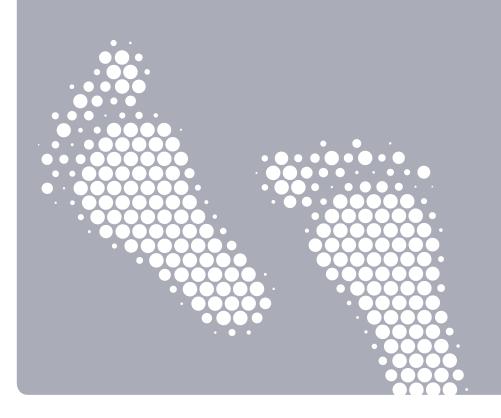
How you should be involved in decisions about your healthcare and treatment.





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### Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for patients requiring information on how to manage a painful flat foot, which is typically pain around the arch and ankle area and may result in a change of foot shape.

### What is this leaflet about?

This leaflet will provide you with the required information to help you decide whether you can self-manage your painful flat foot or whether to seek support or further treatment from an Allied Health Professional, e.g. Podiatrist or Physiotherapist or Orthotist.

# What is a painful flat foot?

Painful flat foot is a general term used to describe pain within the soft tissue structures of the foot, particularly at the underside of the arch and around the inside of the ankle. The main structure which is commonly affected is the posterior tibialis tendon; the muscle comes from the back of the lower leg and the tendon runs along the inside of the ankle and inserts into the arch of the foot.

Other soft tissue structures which can be affected include the spring ligament, tibialis anterior tendon and the plantar fascia. These structures may become symptomatic in response to a change of load or a change of environment, e.g. changes in your activities, weight, footwear or training. The foot or arch can appear to drop or flatten as a result.

## What are the symptoms?

There is usually a gradual onset of symptoms most commonly felt along the inside of the arch or ankle areas. Symptoms can also spread upwards into the lower leg or towards the outside of the ankle. Symptoms are typically worst with activity. It may be difficult for you to go on to your tip toes on the affected foot and you may notice a change in the shape of your foot.

# Do I need imaging?

Clinical presentation is sufficient to assess and diagnose this condition therefore imaging is not typically required in order to form a conservative management plan. Soft tissue imaging including ultrasound or MRI may be indicated if there is uncertainty about the integrity of the soft tissue structures. X-ray may be indicated if there is suspected joint or bone involvement in more persistent cases. It is important you understand that imaging is used to guide clinicians with an appropriate management plan and if the results of the image would not change the treatment plan then imaging is not required.

# How can it be treated?

There are a number of options available to help you manage this condition and your symptoms. These are typically non- surgical and can be split into two categories to;

- Improve tissue tolerance
- Pain management



Poor footwear can be a cause of Painful Flat Foot.

# be Or

Podiatry Service - Painful Flat Foot



Podiatry Service - Painful Flat Foot



### Improving tissue tolerance:

**Suitable Footwear:** Wear a supportive shoe with a cushioned sole. Avoid flat or slip on shoe styles and avoid walking in your bare feet.

**Weight management:** Lowering your body weight can be very effective at reducing the load going through your foot and lower leg.

**Strengthening Exercises:** Consistent and progressive strengthening exercises for the foot and leg muscles have been proven to help symptoms. These exercises include resistance exercises, tip toe exercises and foot muscle exercises.

**Stretching exercises:** If there is tightness in your calf muscle regular stretching techniques can help to improve flexibility.



**Taping / strapping:** Taping may be used in early stages to support the painful soft tissue structures. This tends to be used in the short term only (<28 days). Simple straps can be self-bought.

**Insoles:** Insoles may be used longer term for more persistent cases. Insoles can be used to alter forces and offload specific structures. Simple arch supports can be self-bought. Prescriptive insoles may be provided by your Podiatrist or Orthotist.

**Braces:** Supportive bracing may provide addition support for the soft tissue structures around the inside of your ankle. Simple ankle supports can be self- bought. Firmer, more prescriptive bracing may be provided by your Podiatrist or Orthotics.

### Pain management

Not everyone will require treatment for pain management. If however the pain is persistent and it is impacting your ability to engage in daily activities including sleep, work and sport, then further treatment options may be considered to help you.

**Medication:** Pain relief, e.g. paracetamol, and anti-inflammatories, e.g. ibuprofen, may be helpful (provided it is safe for you to take these).

**Shockwave Therapy:** This is a specialist non-invasive treatment which can be delivered as a short course of treatment (<6 sessions) and may be beneficial in chronic conditions. Consult with your Podiatrist.

### How can I prevent this condition from getting worse or reoccurring?

Symptoms do typically improve and following the advice above should help you to manage this condition and gain meaningful improvements.

Once your symptoms settle it is important to continue following the advice on weight management, suitable footwear and strengthening exercises to reduce the risk of reoccurrence. Should your symptoms continue to get worse and the bones or joints in your feet become affected, surgical options may be available.

## Surgical management

Surgical opinions for painful flat foot are generally not required as many patients will improve with non-operative measures over an 18 month period.

Surgery directly on the soft tissue structures can be successful in improving the quality and strength of the tendon. In persistence cases were the bones or joints have become affected, joint surgery may be indicated.

On occasion when this condition has been ongoing for many years and the foot has become significantly deformed, a hind foot reconstruction may be indicated which involves realigning and fusing the bones and joints at the back of your foot and ankle. A reduction in pain is the most commonly reported outcome of surgery for this condition and patient satisfaction after surgery is typically high.



- NHS 24 Phone: 111
- rcpod.org.uk
- www.nhsinform.scot
- www.nhs.uk





### Further information:



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