

Physical therapist offers tips to avoid foot, ankle pain

By **HEATHER HODGSKISS**
TMC Physical Therapist

As the New Year rolls in, everyone has made resolutions to lose weight. The massive exercise programs have started. The most frequently asked question over the past month has been, "Why is the bottom of my foot hurting?" So, I thought it would be helpful to share some general advice about the foot and ankle.

Questions to ask yourself that will help determine where and what is the cause of the pain are: Where is the foot pain? Is the pain really coming from a different part of the body, but you feel the pain in your lower leg? What activity or activities bring your pain on?

Let's talk about some of the common places in the foot that cause pain. If you are

having pain in the bottom of foot, arch area and heel, it could be plantar fasciitis. Most often plantar fasciitis causes pain along the arch or middle of the heel. This may result from a sudden increase in activities such as walking or running. Pain is often most severe the first few steps out of bed in the morning or after sitting and then beginning to walk.

How do you treat it? Stop activities that may be aggravating. If you are running, and you feel the pain come on, stop running and begin stretching. It could also be running or walking on hard surfaces or in worn out shoes. Proper footwear is essential. Your footwear should be very supportive, have good arch support and have a wide front toe box. If you have flat feet, a motion-control tennis shoe may provide the best support.

Think about how old your shoes are? Tennis shoes are expensive, but older shoes may be the cause of your pain. Shoes lose shock absorption ability with age. Most shoe makers state that tennis shoes last 250 to 500 miles. It may pay to simply get a new pair of shoes to decrease pain.

Stretching the plantar fascia may help to decrease pain. There are several ways to stretch. Use a tennis ball — roll it back and forth over the arch area. Secondly, in a seated position, pull your big toe toward your shin. Using fingers or fist, massage

from the heel to the base of the big toe. This should be done before getting out of bed.

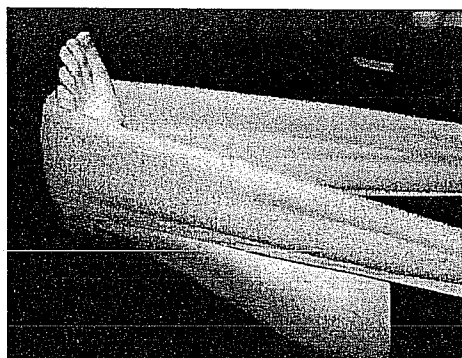
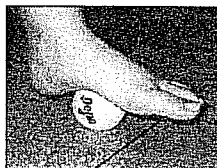
Often times your calf muscles may be tight. There are several ways to stretch them. Start by wrapping a towel around the arch of your foot, pull the ankle back, hold 30 seconds, and perform three times. You may use the edge of your step, a slanted board or the floor, as shown in the picture.

It is important that you stretch your calf first with the back leg straight, then with the knee bent.

If you have low arches, when the foot strikes the floor, your body has a decreased ability to absorb generated forces. The most commonly used mechanical corrections are arch taping, over-the-counter arch supports and custom orthotics. Taping is an inexpensive way to see whether an over-the-counter arch support or a custom orthotic will be worth investing in. A heel cup can also be effective to take some of the pressure off of your heel and plantar fascia area. These can be purchased at most drug stores.

Lastly, using ice can be helpful in the treatment of plantar fasciitis. The best way to ice the bottom of your foot is to freeze a water bottle. Then place the frozen bottle under the arch of your foot, use a forward and backward motion for 5 to 10 minutes.

I hope that these remedies assist in decreasing your foot pain. If you have other foot or ankle questions, contact the TMC Physical Therapy Department with your questions or comments.



TMC's new "Heart Beat"

By **RAY GIBBONS**
TMC Administrator

The primary responsibility of Teton Medical Center is to "be there" when the people we serve need us. However there are at least two sides of the "be there" coin — one is for the TMC staff and medical providers to be highly skilled with the appropriate technology/equipment. The second side is for you (i.e. the people we serve) to know the services TMC provides and let TMC know what additional services you would like TMC to provide.

We have made a change with the "Heart Beat" newsletter to address the second side of the "be there" coin. TMC will now prepare and distribute the "Heart Beat" the last week of each month. The newsletter will be one page with the following components: stories that feature specific services each month, a health-care policy federal or state update, stories on staff training and technology, upcoming healthcare events and a new feature "Healthcare Career Corner." We look forward to your input and suggestions on each month's "Heart Beat." You can contact either Joyce Lindgren in Community Relations or myself with your ideas.

HERE'S TO YOUR HEALTH

Career Corner

HEALTHY HEART NUMBERS

Factor	Goal	
Total Cholesterol	Less than 200 mg/dL	
LDL ("Bad") Cholesterol	LDL cholesterol goals vary.	
	Less than 100 mg/dL	Optimal
	100 to 129 mg/dL	Near Optimal/Above Optimal
	130 to 159 mg/dL	Borderline High
	160 to 189 mg/dL	High
190 mg/dL and above	Very High	
HDL ("Good") Cholesterol	50 mg/dL or higher	
Triglycerides	<150 mg/dL	
Blood Pressure	<120/80 mmHg	
Fasting Glucose	<100 mg/dL	
Body Mass Index (BMI)	<25 Kg/m²	
Waist Circumference	<35 inches	
Exercise	Minimum of 30 minutes most days, if not all days of the week	

Healthy heart numbers

During a heart check up, your doctor takes a careful look at your "numbers," including your cholesterol and triglyceride levels, your blood pressure and more. Knowing your numbers is an important part of keeping your heart-healthy. It can help you and your doctor know your risks and mark the progress you're making toward a healthier you.

Keep your numbers in check

The first step to a healthy

heart is learning the simple things you can do every day. By getting involved in fun physical activities and enjoying nutritious meals, you can help reduce your risk of heart disease. But don't do it for the "numbers," do it for you! Start slow and easy and work your way up gradually.

Get physical ...

One of the best ways to reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease is to start getting regular, moderate exercise, at least 30 minutes a day, most days of the week. Of course, if it has been a while since you've been physically active, the hardest part is just getting started. Always check with your physician be-

fore starting a new exercise program.

Diet & nutrition ...

Make good food choices. Healthy food habits can help you reduce three risk factors for heart attack and stroke: high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, and excess body weight.

You can visit the American Heart Association on the Internet for additional information. Go to:

www.americanheart.org

To get started on a heart-healthy diet and exercise program contact Teton Medical Center at 466-5763 to see what we can do for you right here locally.

TMC's monthly issue of the new "Heart Beat" will have a special focus on medical careers with helpful information. This month we introduce you to:

- Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA)
- Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)

If you have an interest in helping people and providing quality care, you may be interested in TMC where we can help you get started. A career in nursing is a fulfilling experience and has many rewards.

Starting in the position of Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA):

- TMC can help arrange your training and certification through an affiliate in Great Falls. In as little as two weeks you will be trained and certified.
- TMC's entry-level wage for CNA is \$10.40 per hour. Nationally the CNA wages fluctuate from as low as \$8.42 to a high of \$13.85 per hour.
- CNA certifications from other states can be transferred by contacting the Montana Board of Nursing.

The position of Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). TMC has had CNA employees take advantage of other educational programs to advance to this next level of nursing.

- LPNs require a two-year college of technology program. Depending on individual educational levels, prerequisites can increase time to a three-year program.
- Educational opportunities in Montana are through:
 - MSU-COT, Great Falls
 - MSU-COT, Billings
 - UM-COT, Missoula
 - UM-COT, Helena
 - Flathead Valley Community College, Kalispell
 - MT Tech-COT, Butte
- TMC's entry wage is \$14 per hour and based on experience could be higher. National wages vary from \$11 to \$16 per hour.

If you have an interest in a nursing career, call TMC Human Resources, Shirley Johnson, 466-5763, for more information or arrange a tour of TMC.



Hometown Quality Care