

Work-related disease series

Plantar Fasciitis



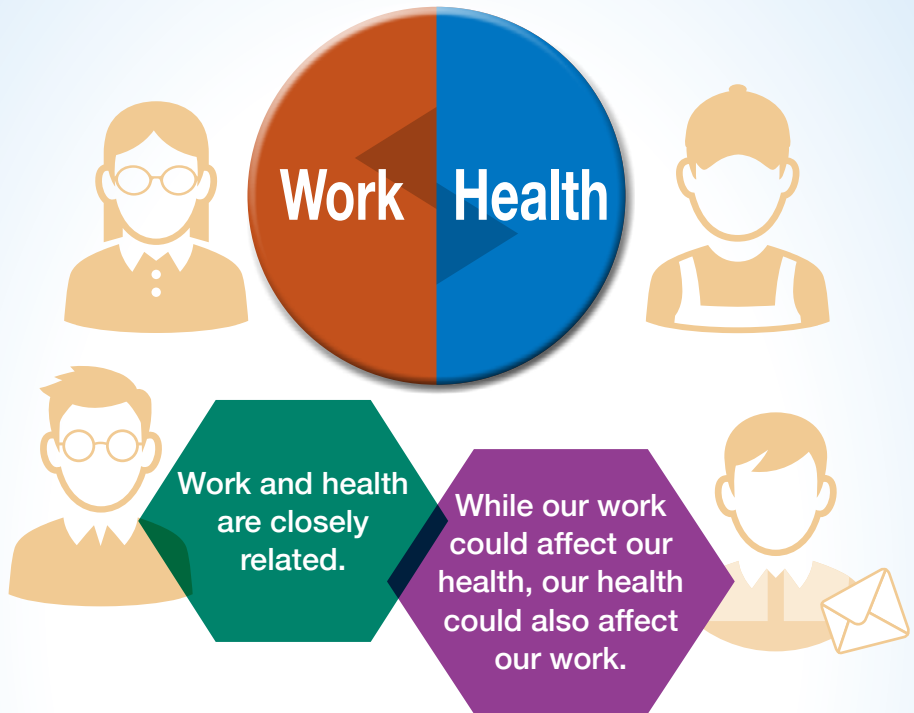
Occupational Safety and Health Branch
Labour Department



safety at work



Introduction



According to the International Labour Organization, the relationship between work and disease can be classified into the following three categories:

- (1) Occupational diseases - have specific or strong relationship to the exposure to physical, chemical, biological or psychosocial factors in the workplace. These factors in the work environment are predominant and essential in the causation of the diseases, for example, silicosis, asbestosis, occupational deafness, etc.
- (2) Work-related diseases – are multifactorial in origin, where factors in the work environment may play a role, together with other risk factors, in the development of such diseases, for example, plantar fasciitis, lower limb varicose vein, shoulder tendonitis, etc.
- (3) General diseases – are diseases affecting the working population. They do not have causal relationship with work but may be aggravated by occupational health hazards, for example, diabetes mellitus, gout, rheumatoid arthritis, etc.

This pamphlet introduces plantar fasciitis which is a common “work-related disease”.

What is plantar fasciitis?

It refers to the inflammation of plantar fascia and the soft tissues around it due to injury or strain.

Causes

- Personal factors e.g. overweight, flat foot, club foot etc.
- Standing at work or prolonged walking, thus straining the foot



- Wearing inappropriate shoes for a long period of time e.g. body too tight, sole too hard or heel too high
- Other factors, e.g. increased stress on the foot due to frequent carrying of heavy objects

Signs and Symptoms

- Heel pain
 - ❖ Particularly significant when stepping out of bed in the morning
 - ❖ Worsens after prolonged standing or walking
- Redness, swelling or heat may be noticed at the affected part of the foot



Which occupations have a higher risk?

- Teachers, postmen, deliverymen and sales personnel, etc.

How to prevent it?

1 Avoid standing at work or prolonged walking

- As far as reasonably practicable, provide a suitable work chair or a chair for occasional sitting at the working location for the employee standing at work
- Flexible work arrangement allows employees to relieve lower limbs fatigue
- Employers shall arrange for employees a break with sitting for 10 to 15 minutes after continuous standing work for every 2 to 3 hours or perform appropriate stretching exercises to relax their legs



2 Reduce pressure on the foot

- Avoid carrying heavy objects or use trolleys when needed
- Reduce body weight as appropriate
- Shock absorbent mat could be used

3 Select suitable shoes



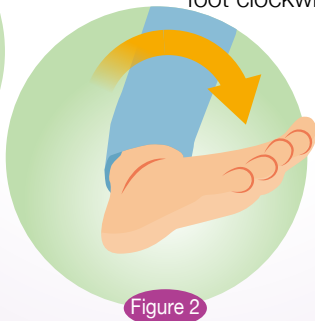
- Preferred qualities
 - ❖ Comfortable and light-weight
 - ❖ Softer soles with better shock absorption ability, thus decreasing shock arising from walking
- Appropriate insoles can be used, if necessary, to reduce pressure on the foot
- Avoid wearing high-heel shoes, for example, over 5 cm or 2 inches high

4 Suitable exercises



- Calf muscles stretching exercise

- 1 Stand and place your hands on a wall. Bend your right leg and stretch your left leg backward with your toes pointing forward
- 2 Lean your body forward without raising the heels to stretch the calf muscles of the left leg. Hold for 10 seconds
- 3 Perform similar movements with the other leg
- 4 Repeat this exercise 5 times



- Ankle exercise

- 1 Be seated. Raise one leg. Rotate your foot clockwise 10 times
- 2 Then rotate your foot anti-clockwise 10 times
- 3 Repeat the same movements 10 times each with the other leg

- Foot exercise

- 1 Sit on a chair. Place a towel on the floor and step on it
- 2 Keep your toes flat while grasping the towel with the sole, then relax
- 3 Repeat this movement 20 times
- 4 Perform the exercise 20 times with the other foot



5 Healthy lifestyle

- Adequate rest and sleep
- Engage in regular physical activities
- Balanced diet and maintain a desirable body weight



How to treat it?

- Rest - Suitable rest can reduce stress on the foot and pressure over the sole
- Cold therapy - Wrap ice cubes in a towel and apply it over the sore part for 5-10 minutes can relieve swelling and pain



- Medication - Oral, topical and local injection of analgesics can help to relieve pain and control inflammation
- Physiotherapy - Alleviate symptoms of inflammation and strengthen muscles and tendons
- Podiatry - Fitting of suitable insoles

Conclusion

Plantar fasciitis is a "work-related disease". Although work is only one of the many risk factors in the development of the disease, the chance of getting this disease can be minimized by eliminating the health hazards at work or reducing their risks, and adopting appropriate preventive measures.

Enquiries

If you wish to enquire about this leaflet or other occupational safety and health (OSH) matters, please contact the Occupational Safety and Health Branch of the Labour Department:

Tel. : 2852 4041 or
2559 2297 (auto-recording service available outside office hours)

Fax : 2581 2049

Email : enquiry@labour.gov.hk

Information on the services offered by the Labour Department and on major labour legislation is also available on our website at www.labour.gov.hk.

Occupational Health Clinics of the Labour Department

Any worker who may have contracted work-related illnesses can call or visit the Occupational Health Clinics for appointment booking. Doctor's referral is not required.

- Kwun Tong Occupational Health Clinic Tel.: 2343 7133
- Fanling Occupational Health Clinic Tel.: 3543 5701

Complaints

If you have any complaint about unsafe operations or environments at workplaces, please call the Labour Department's OSH complaint hotline at 2542 2172 or fill in and submit an online OSH complaint form on our website. All complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence.



Online OSH complaint Form

This leaflet can be issued free of charge and can be obtained from offices of the Occupational Health Service of the Labour Department. It can also be downloaded from the Labour Department's website at www.labour.gov.hk. For enquiries about the addresses and telephone numbers of the offices, please visit the Labour Department's website or call 2852 4041.

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