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*"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"*

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## Oh Those Poor Achy Feet

Our feet are one of the parts of our bodies that we use and abuse every day. As we walk or jog, we submit hundreds of pounds of pressure on them. They take this abuse all day, every day. We do not realize how important they are until they start to hurt or not work properly.

The anatomy of the foot is quite a marvelous thing. There is a total of twenty-six bones and over thirty joints in each foot. There are also dozens of ligaments and muscles. The foot is a very intricate mechanical system and if abused repetitively or traumatically injured, it can experience numerous problems.

One of the more common chronic problems in the foot is called "plantar fasciitis". It can occur when the foot is submitted to prolonged standing on hard floors, repetitive jarring such as jogging, or the wearing of poor quality/worn out shoes. It can also occur when one or more of the many joints in the foot are not functioning or moving properly. In these scenarios, the foot experiences too much pressure in an uncontrolled manner and the plantar "ligament or fascia" becomes damaged. The plantar fascia is a large ligament that reaches from the bottom and front of the heel bone (calcaneus) to the underside and base of the toes (metatarsals). Normally, when you are standing, there is a small space under the inside half of the foot called the "arch". The plantar fascia is designed to assist in holding up the "arch" of the foot. When abused, the ligament can get microscopic tears. The bottoms of the feet become very sore, usually the next day after overdoing it. As long as you are standing and demanding the damaged plantar fascia to bear the weight, you will feel a sharp or burning pain at the bottom of the feet.

The treatment of plantar fasciitis can have a multifaceted approach. In a Chiropractic setting, the patient is instructed to avoid using the feet for a few days until the sharp pain subsides. Ice can be applied to the bottoms of the feet to decrease the inflammation around the ligament. The joints in the feet should be mobilized or even manipulated. When all the joints in the feet are functioning or moving normally, the pressure from walking, standing, or running is distributed

evenly throughout the foot and not isolated at specific areas. Therapeutic modalities such as Interferential Current can also be used. This is just low level electrical stimulation of the injured areas to promote healing.

If plantar fasciitis continues to plague you, even though you avoid the aggravating activities, the mechanics of the foot may be the primary source of the problem. The arch of the foot sometimes flattens, which will dramatically alter how efficiently the foot works. If left untreated, pain at the inside of the knee and even the lower back can arise. This is fairly easy to diagnose and can be corrected by a "custom made orthotic". An orthotic is an insert for the shoes that has been specifically made to support your foot where it needs it the most. This is different for every foot, even on the same person. Therefore, you cannot purchase these off the shelf in a store and just put them in your shoes. They have to be "custom made". A Chiropractor or Podiatrist can do this for you. Once the feet have the proper arch support and the person avoids the aggravating activities, the plantar fascia can heal properly and remain that way.

As I mention each week, only your body can heal itself. The job of the Chiropractor or Health Care Practitioner is to assist the body to do this. As with plantar fasciitis, the problem with the feet must first be corrected, then the body will heal on its own. Treating the symptoms alone will not solve the problem long term, as it will be prone to reoccur.