Before having a corticosteroids injection, a local anaesthetic (painkilling medication) may be used to numb your foot so that the injection is not painful.

**Surgery**

If all the treatments listed above do not relieve your heel pain, your GP may refer you to an orthopaedic surgeon for plantar release surgery if appropriate.

**Plantar release surgery**

The most widely used type of surgery for heel pain is known as plantar release surgery. This is when the surgeon cuts the fascia to release it from the heel bone. This should reduce tension in your plantar fascia, which in turn should reduce inflammation and relieve your pain symptoms.

Useful website: www.heelfixkit.com

If you discover any problems with your feet, contact your Podiatry Department or GP immediately. If they are not available, go to your nearest accident and emergency department. Remember, any delay in getting advice or treatment when you have a problem can lead to more serious problems.

**Equality Statement**

At South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust we are fully committed to equality and diversity, both as an employer and as a service provider. We have a policy statement in our Equality Strategy that clearly outlines our commitment to equality for service users, patients and staff:

You and your family have the right to be treated fairly and be routinely involved in decisions about your treatment and care. You can expect to be treated with dignity and respect. You will not be discriminated against on any grounds including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. You have a responsibility to treat other service users, patients and our staff with dignity and respect.

Our information for patients can also be made available in other languages, Braille, audio tape, disc or in large print.

**PALS**

We offer a Patient Advice Liaison Service (PALS). This is a confidential service for families to help with any questions or concerns about local health services. You can contact the service by the direct telephone line on 01926 600 054 by email: Pals@swft.nhs.uk or by calling in person to the PALS Office which is located in the Lakin Road Entrance of Warwick Hospital.

SWFT Podiatry Department does not supply sport orthotics, purely for use in sports.
Treatment causes

Treatment for heel pain usually involves trying a combination of techniques, such as painkillers and exercise, to relieve pain and speed up your recovery time. Surgery is usually regarded as a ‘treatment of last resort’ and is not a guarantee of effective treatment.

1. Rest
Rest the affected foot whenever possible by avoiding standing for long periods of time or walking long distances. However, it is important to regularly exercise your feet and calves with stretching exercises. See our stretching exercise leaflet for more information.

2. Pain relief
Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, are a type of painkilling medication that are usually effective in helping to relieve pain.

3. Ice packs
Some people also find that applying an ice pack to the affected heel for 5 to 10 minutes can help to relieve pain and inflammation. Ice packs are available from larger pharmacies and supermarkets. Do not apply the ice pack directly to the area because this can damage the skin. Instead, wrap the ice pack in a towel. If you do not have an ice pack, use a packet of frozen vegetables.

4. Exercise
Regular exercises designed to stretch both your calf muscles and your plantar fascia (band of tissue that runs under the sole of the foot) should help relieve pain and improve flexibility in the affected foot. A number of exercises are described in the stretching exercise leaflet. It is usually recommended that you do the exercises on both legs, even if only one of your heels is affected by pain. This will improve your balance and stability, as well as helping to relieve heel pain.

5. Footwear
Depending on your usual choice of footwear, your GP or podiatrist may advise you to change your footwear. Avoid wearing flat-soled shoes as these will provide no support to your heel and could make pain worse. Ideally, you should be wearing shoes that provide good support to the arches of your feet while cushioning your heels, such as laced-up sport shoes.

For women, wearing high heels and, for men, wearing high-heeled boots or brogues can provide short- to moderate-term relief of pain, as they help reduce the pressure on the heel. But these types of footwear may not be suitable in the long-term, as they can lead to further episodes of heel pain. Your GP or podiatrist should be able to advise you.

6. Orthoses/Insoles
Orthoses are in-soles that fit inside your shoe to support your foot and assist the healing of your heel. You can buy orthoses off the shelf at larger pharmacies or sports shops. If your pain keeps reoccurring, does not respond to simple treatment measures, or you have an abnormal foot shape or structure, custom-made orthoses are available. They are specifically made to fit the shape of your feet. However, there is currently no evidence that the custom-made orthoses are more effective than those bought off the shelf.

Strapping and splinting

An alternative to using orthoses is to have your heel strapped with sports strapping (zinc oxide) tape. The strapping will help to relieve pressure on your heel.

Your GP or podiatrist should be able to teach you how to apply the straps yourself.

Night splints can also be useful in some cases. Most people sleep with their toes pointing down, which means that the tissue inside the heel is squeezed together.

Night splints, which look like a type of boot, are designed to keep the toes and feet pointing up during sleep. This will stretch both the Achilles tendon and your plantar fascia while you sleep, which should help speed up your recovery time.

See your G.P. about this.

Corticosteroid injections

If none of the treatments above help to relieve your pain symptoms, your GP may recommend that you have an injection of corticosteroids.

Corticosteroids are a type of medication that have a powerful anti-inflammatory effect. They have to be used sparingly because overuse can cause serious side effects, such as weight gain and high blood pressure (hypertension).

As a result of this, it is not usually recommended that more than three corticosteroid injections are given within a year in any part of the body.