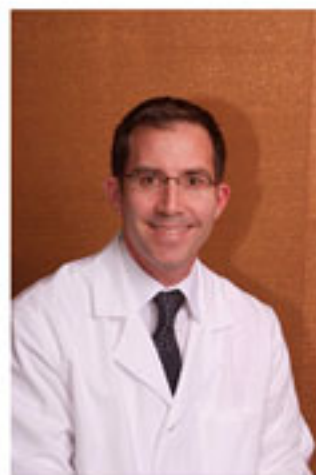


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### Training

D.P.M. - Pennsylvania College of Podiatric Medicine in Philadelphia, 1994  
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"I have heel pain" is a comment that podiatrists hear nearly every day. Patients complain that their heel hurts when they get out of bed in the morning, or after they've been sitting for long periods of time. Heel pain is non-discriminating; just about anyone can have it. Despite the many causes, it's a prevalent problem, but one that can have solutions. The heel bone, the largest in our foot, withstands a great deal of abuse as we cram it into our shoes day after day and subject it to our full weight with every step. With such abuse, it's no wonder that heel pain (most commonly called plantar fasciitis) is a problem for so many of us. In our pursuit of healthy bodies, we often let our heel pain go without treatment for much too long. Heel pain is generally the result of faulty biomechanics (walking/gait abnormalities), that places too much stress on the heel bone and the soft tissues that attach to it. The stress can also result from injury or a bruise incurred while walking, running, or jumping on hard surfaces. It can also be due to wearing poorly constructed footwear or from being overweight. Many people complain of heel pain after a night's sleep. As you walk, the heel pain may lessen or even disappear, but that may be only a false sense of relief. The pain usually returns after prolonged rest or extensive walking. Heel pain is commonly accompanied by a heel spur, a bony growth on the underside of the heel bone. The spur, visible by xray, appears as a protrusion that can extend forward as much as half an inch. Heel spurs are a result of strain on the muscles and ligaments of the foot, or a stretching of the long band of tissue that connects the heel and the ball of the foot. Your podiatrist can evaluate and treat this condition and recommend options that help to alleviate pain. Plantar fasciitis can usually be treated without surgery, using exercise or orthotics (custom-made or prescription shoe inserts). There are many other causes of heel pain other than plantar fasciitis. These can include arthritis, Achilles tendonitis or bone bruises. Stress fractures of the heel bone can also occur, although infrequently. When children suffer from heel pain, a visit to the podiatrist is imperative because their problems may be quite different from those of adults. Regardless of the cause, evaluation by a podiatrist is your first step to relief. To prevent heel pain, try some of these tips recommended by podiatric physicians:

- Always wear properly fitted shoes specific to your activity with shock-absorbent soles, rigid shanks and supportive heel counters.
- Replace shoes frequently and avoid excessive wear and tear.
- Warm up and stretch before and after exercise. Pace yourself when starting new exercise routines.
- If you are overweight, consider losing weight to reduce the stress on your feet and other bones and muscles in your body.
- Avoid walking barefoot on hard surfaces, both inside and out.