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Ashfield Orthotics: A Foot Health Clinic, Inc.

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With all areas identified here, orthotics can help. *Sometimes very good over the counter devices are simply enough.* Based on pain, onset, degree of pathology, lifestyles, work needs & other factors, custom orthotics are often better.

## Heel Pain

Our heels contain the calcaneus, the largest foot bone by mass and volume. And it is oddly shaped, some would say twisted, from an evolutionary perspective. Heels are also cradled by two types of tough, fatty tissue. Of course, we do not think of these things while we are typically landing on it thousands of times each day. But that pounding doesn't explain the pain. Some people's heels never hurt. (Lucky!)

Heel bones are not isolated. They are attached to others. They nestle our finicky ankle bones. They bear our full weight. And they are often the site of what your doctor may diagnose as "plantar fasciitis." Plantar just means bottom (of us). Fascia just refers to connective tissue. (We are just full of the stuff.) When we move, the things attached to the heel pull it all sorts of directions. Speaking of being stuffed with stuff, I like to think of us as incredible collections of ropes and sticks and pulleys, with other, more gooey bits, that all have neat sounding Latin names that we won't get into here.

When the fascia that connect yours heel to your toes - kind of like a girdle for the bottom of your foot - gets pulled too much because other part of your foot - like your arches - have decided to leave work early or go on vacation all together. The inflammation kicks in. (Forgive the poor pun.) Then micro-tears kick in. Then calcification can happen, making spurs.

Lots of things can happen to our heels. And much of the time they do just fine with all that pounding. Until they don't. Cortical bone can break down. Soft tissues can tear. Joints can get loose. Or seize up. Or move side to side far too much. All sorts of things.

Orthotics support surrounding structures so that the tissues that over-worked & didn't go on vacation can relax a bit. Orthotics can re-enlist the tissues that did get away for a bit. Orthotics can even distribute painful pressures so that more bits and pieces get fair work for fair pay... Which makes your day.

## General Foot Ache

If it is painful on the dorsum (top), beneath (plantar surface) or even the sides (medial or lateral), your doctor may diagnose "biomechanical issues" or "functional pes planus" after they rule out other medical concerns.

This is where a foot function and treatment specialist like your friendly neighborhood certified pedorthist comes in. As we see above with just the heels, lots of things are going on in our feet. While under pressure, feet are forced to rotate, bend, lift, drop and twist, all while filling or emptying liquids and being controlled by electricity. (And that is just taking a step!) Personally, I am in awe they function as well as they do for, for as long as they do, for most people.

Orthotics is from the Greek "*Orthos*," meaning to align. Like an orthodontist aligns teeth with technology. Or an orthopedic surgeon aligns badly broken bones. But they do more than align. They mediate movement, distribute pressure, assist with proprioception for balance, stabilize structures after injury and protect fragile or damaged skin. Sometime all these at once. If feet hurt a bit, check your shoes for wear. If pain persists or gets worse. See your doctor. Then see us.