

Our highly skilled podiatrists

are registered with the Health Care Professionals Council (HCPC) and members of the College of Podiatrists. The practice is accredited by the College of Podiatrists (CoP).

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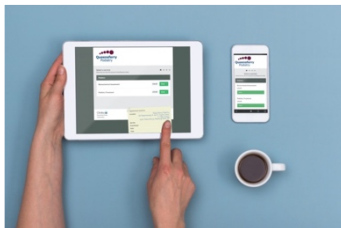
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Professional and caring podiatrists



Plantar Plate Tear

A Guide for patients

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What is a Plantar Plate Tear?

The plantar plate is a thick ligament type structure with attachments which inserts into the base of the phalanges (toe bones) in the area of the ball of the foot. Injuries of the plantar plate includes partial tears through to complete rupture.

The plantar plate is designed to protect the head of the metatarsal from pressure and prevent over extension of our toes.

What causes it?

When the plantar plate is overloaded or strained, a tear can develop. As your second metatarsal is often the longest, plantar plate tears most often develop at the second toe. Contributors to a plantar plate tear can include:

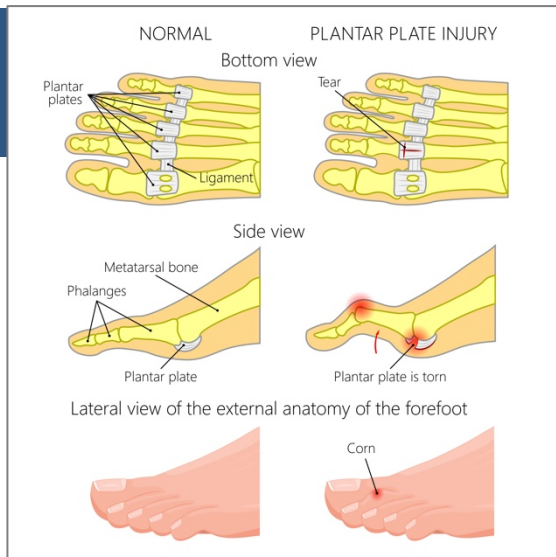
- Biomechanical abnormalities – a short or elevated 1st metatarsal or a long 2nd or 3rd metatarsal. These abnormalities put constant pressure on the plantar plate and contribute to its degeneration.
- Having a bunion and/or a hammer toe.
- Activities that put high pressure on the ball of the foot, such as dancing, running and climbing stairs.

Symptoms?

Pain – it can be described as a dull ache or a sharp pain in the ball of the foot and it may feel as though there is not enough cushion between the bone and the ground.

Shifting of the toe - over time, as the tear increases, the toe (most commonly the 2nd or 3rd toe) will begin to shift upwards or to one side. When the foot is placed on the ground the toe may not touch. When the toe is elevated in this way, more pressure is placed onto the head of the metatarsal, causing bone bruising and pain.

Chronic Plantar Plate Injury - If the plantar plate tear is not treated properly, the condition becomes chronic and the deformity can be greater. As the deformity progresses, the cartilage in the joint capsule can become eroded, leading to arthritis and increased pain.



Restoring the plantar plate can take time, with the majority of patients pain-free within 3-4 months. The initial symptoms do improve faster, allowing most people to return to regular activity within one month.

Treatment?

Initially, treating the plantar plate tear will focus on relieving the painful symptoms. This may involve the use of:

- Strapping can be very helpful in reducing pain, using a rigid zinc oxide tape and pulling the toe in a downward position to help offload a plantar plate
- Padding to offload the damaged area
- Avoiding the activities that aggravate the pain
- Anti-inflammatory medications
- A corticosteroid injection may be considered if conservative treatments have failed to improve the symptoms.
- Very occasionally, surgery may need to be performed to either repair the plantar plate.