FOOT AND ANKLE EXERCISES

EXERCISES FOR PLANTAR FASCIITIS

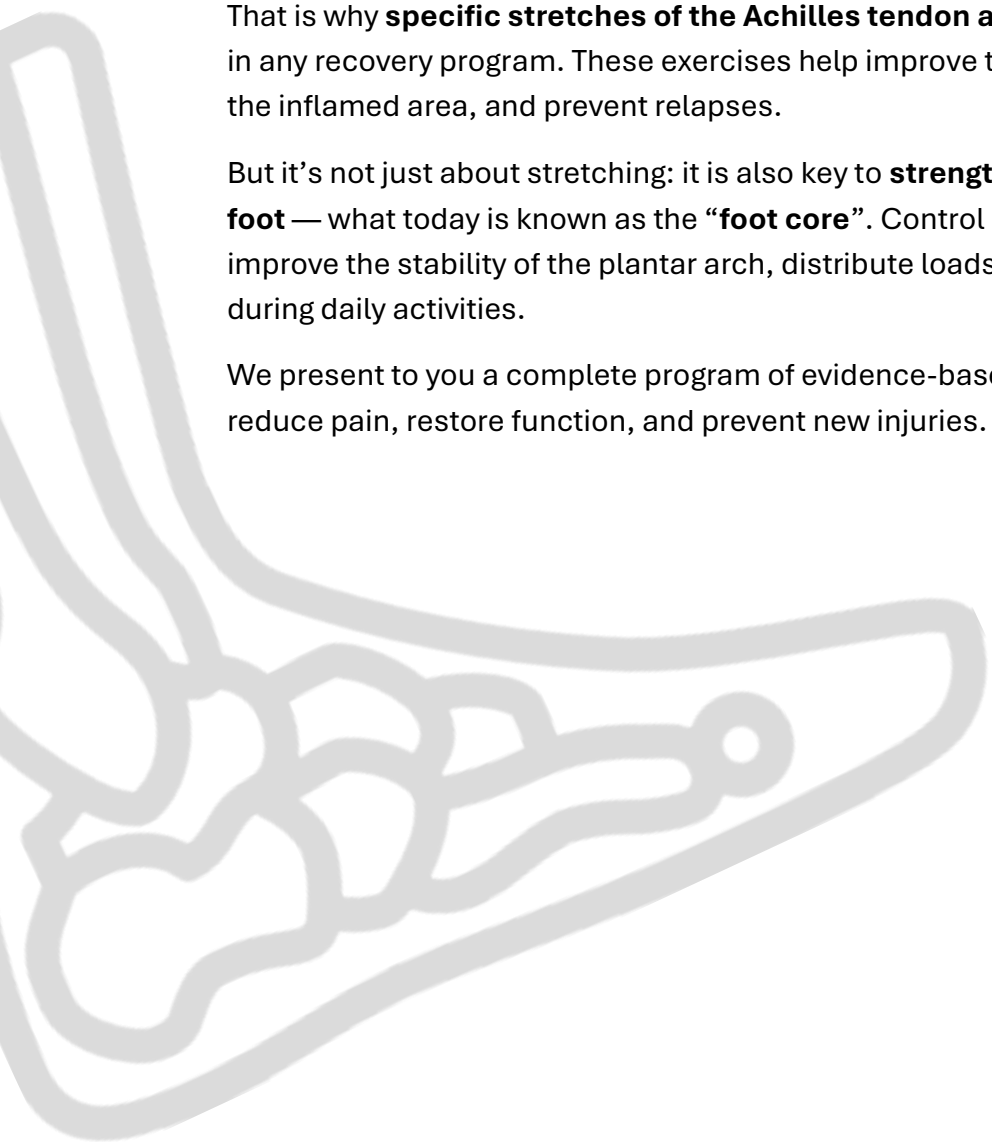
Plantar fasciitis is one of the most frequent causes of heel pain, especially in active adults between 25 and 65 years old. It is a degenerative process that affects the plantar fascia, a connective tissue that connects the heel to the toes of the foot. Its inflammation can cause intense pain, especially in the mornings or after prolonged periods of rest.

One of the most relevant factors in the origin of this pathology is the shortening of the posterior leg musculature, especially of the triceps surae (calf muscles and soleus) and the Achilles tendon. This stiffness limits ankle mobility and increases tension on the plantar fascia, favoring its irritation.

That is why **specific stretches of the Achilles tendon and plantar fascia** are fundamental in any recovery program. These exercises help improve tissue elasticity, reduce pressure in the inflamed area, and prevent relapses.

But it's not just about stretching: it is also key to **strengthen the intrinsic muscles of the foot** — what today is known as the "**foot core**". Control and strength exercises in this area improve the stability of the plantar arch, distribute loads better, and protect the fascia during daily activities.

We present to you a complete program of evidence-based exercises, designed to help you reduce pain, restore function, and prevent new injuries.



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ACHILLES TENDON-PLANTAR FASCIA STRETCH 1

Sit on the floor with your legs stretched out in front. Use an elastic band or wide band and place it on the sole of the foot you are going to exercise. Bend the knee of that leg. From there, start to stretch the leg slowly. As you do this, point your toes upwards. Hold that position for several seconds. You can count out loud to help you control the time. Afterwards, relax the leg and bend the knee again. This movement can be done with one leg at a time or with both at the same time.

When beginning these stretches, it is crucial to avoid pain. You should stretch only until you feel tension in the muscle and tendons, and then **maintain that position for a time** until that tension begins to subside. With practice, you will be able to prolong the holding time, but **you should never reach pain.**

Objectives:

- Reduce tension on the plantar fascia.
- Improve ankle dorsiflexion.
- Decrease pain and prevent relapses.
- Increase the elasticity of the Achilles tendon and the posterior chain.

ACHILLES TENDON-PLANTAR FASCIA STRETCH 2

Stand on a flat, firm object about 10 cm high. It can be a thick book, a step, or a wooden block. Place only the front part of the foot on the edge of the object. The heel must remain suspended, not touching the surface. To maintain balance, find a stable support point such as a wall, a table, or a chair. Once well positioned, stretch the knees fully. Then slowly rise onto tiptoes. After that, relax the muscles and let the heels drop as far as possible, below the level of the step. Hold that position for several seconds. Go back up onto tiptoes and repeat the movement in a controlled manner.

When starting the stretches, it is crucial to avoid pain. You should stretch only until you feel tension in the muscle and tendons, and then **maintain that position for a time** until that tension begins to subside. With practice, you will be able to prolong the holding time, but **you should never reach pain.**

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ACHILLES TENDON-PLANTAR FASCIA STRETCH 3

Standing facing a wall. Move back the leg that you are going to stretch, keeping the knee straight, without lifting the foot off the ground. Then, bend your arms forward and bend the front knee, until you notice a feeling of tightness.

When starting the stretches, it is crucial to avoid pain. You should stretch only until you feel tension in the muscle and tendons, and then **maintain that position** for a time until that tension begins to subside. With practice, you will be able to prolong the holding time, but **you should never reach pain.**

Objectives:

- Relieve tension and stiffness in the calf.
- Stretch the calf muscles and soleus. Relief of heel and foot pain.
- Increase the elasticity of the Achilles tendon and the posterior chain.
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PLANTAR FASCIA STRETCH

Sitting on a chair. The injured foot rests on the opposite knee. Grab the big toe and pull it back toward the shin, until you feel tension in the plantar fascia.

When beginning the stretches, it is crucial to avoid pain. You should stretch only until you feel tension in the muscle and tendons, and then **maintain that position for a time** until that tension begins to subside. With practice, you will be able to prolong the holding time, but **you should never reach pain.**

Objectives:

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- Improve ankle dorsiflexion.
- Decrease pain and prevent relapses.
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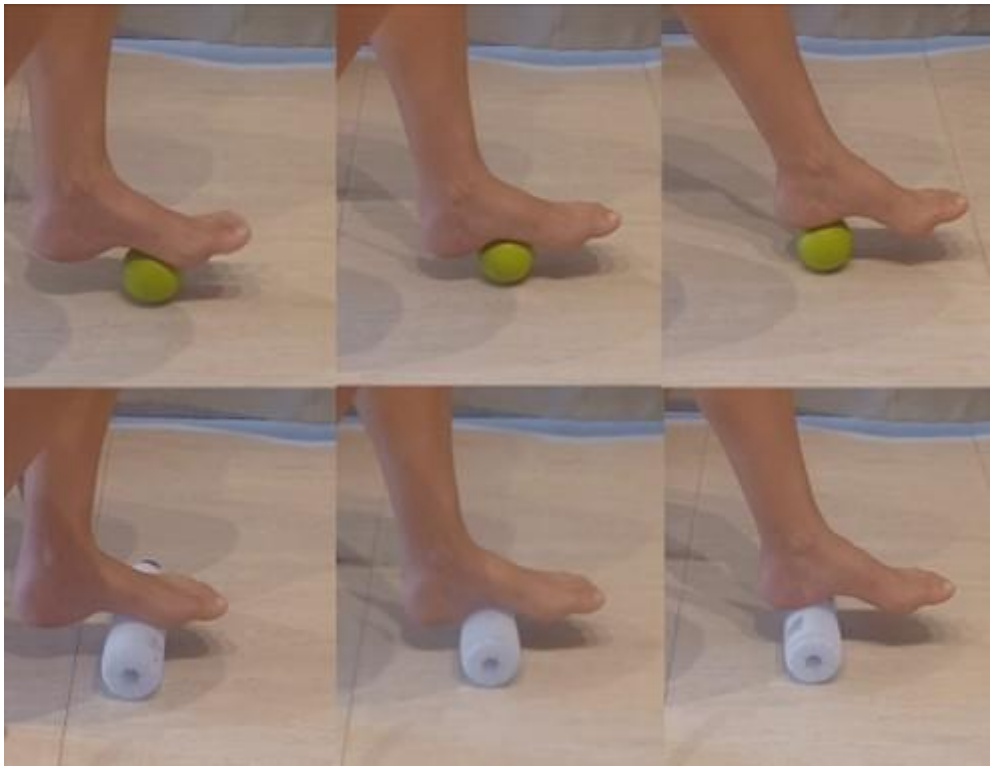
FASCIAL MASSAGE EXERCISE WITH BALL OR FROZEN BOTTLE



Sit on a chair. Using a small, hard ball, or a golf ball, roll the ball along the plantar arch without applying excessive pressure. You can perform this same exercise with a frozen water bottle. Perform the exercise with both feet.

Objectives:

- Relax the fascial tissue.
- Relieve muscle tension.
- Reduce inflammation.
- Improve blood circulation.
- Increase mobility and flexibility.

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SHORT FOOT EXERCISE

Sitting. Knees and ankles at 90º. Draw the base of your big toe toward your heel without flexing the toes, keeping the heel and forefoot pressed on the floor, as if trying to make your foot shorter. Hold each contraction for 5 seconds.

Perform:

- 1 set.
- 10 repetitions with each foot.

Progress:

- Sitting: 1x10 repetitions.
- Standing: 1x10 repetitions.
- Supported on one leg only: 1x10 repetitions.

Objectives:

- Activation and strengthening of the intrinsic foot muscles.
- Improvement of the neurosensory function of the foot.
- Rehabilitation and prevention of common pathologies such as plantar fasciitis.

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TOWEL SCRUNCH EXERCISE

Standing or sitting. Place a small towel on the floor. Put your foot on the towel and use the toes of one foot to scrunch the towel toward you, grabbing it with the toes. Repeat the action until the entire towel is gathered.

Perform:

- 1 set.
- 10 repetitions with each foot.

Progress:

- 1: Sitting posture 2 x 10 repetitions.
- 2: Standing posture 2 x 10 repetitions.
- 3: Standing posture 3 x 15 repetitions.

Objectives:

- Strengthens the intrinsic muscles of the foot, especially the toe flexors and the plantar muscles of the foot.
- Increases support and strength of the plantar arch.
- Improvement of proprioception.
- Prevention and rehabilitation of various foot pathologies.

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BIG TOE ELEVATION EXERCISE

Standing or sitting. Foot supported on the ground. Raise only the big toe, keeping the other four toes pressed to the ground.

Perform:

- 1 set.
- 10 repetitions with each foot.

Progress:

- 1: Sitting position 2 x 10 repetitions.
- 2: Standing position 2 x 10 repetitions.
- 3: Standing on one leg only: 1x10 repetitions.

Objectives:

- Improvement of coordination and fine muscular control of the foot.
- Strengthening of the plantar arch.
- Increased proprioception, balance, and general foot stability.
- Optimizes the push-off phase during walking and running.

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FIRST AND FIFTH TOE LIFT EXERCISE

Standing or sitting. Foot supported on the ground. Raise only the big toe, keeping the other four toes pressed to the ground. Then, keep the big toe pressed on the ground and lift the rest of the toes. Hold each elevation movement for 5 seconds.

Perform:

- 1 set.
- 10 repetitions with each foot.

Progress:

- 1: Sitting 1x10 repetitions.
- 2: Standing 1x10 repetitions.
- 3: Supported on just one leg 1x10 repetitions.

Objectives:

- Improvement of coordination and fine muscular control of the foot.
- Activation and strengthening of the intrinsic musculature, especially muscles like the interossei and the abductor of the big toe.
- Increased proprioception, balance, and overall foot stability.

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HEEL RAISE EXERCISE

Standing, rise up and down on the forefoot using both feet. Initially, use a chair or table for balance.

Perform:

- 1 set.
- 20 repetitions.

Progress:

- 1: 1x20 repetitions.
- 2: 2x20 repetitions.
- 3: 2x30 repetitions.

Objectives:

- Strengthen the calf muscles (gastrocnemius and soleus).
- Help in the propulsion phase when walking or running.
- Improve ankle stability.
- Improve support of the plantar arch.

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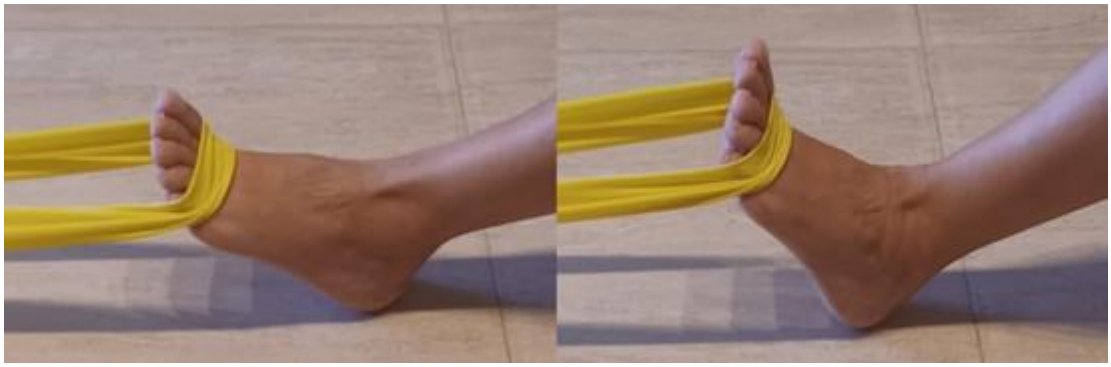
TOE AND ANKLE DORSIFLEXION EXERCISE WITH ELASTIC BAND



Sitting posture, using a resistance band around the forefoot, perform dorsiflexion of the ankle and the toes of the foot and return to the original position.

Perform:

- 1 set.
- 10 repetitions.

Progress:

- 1: 1x10 repetitions.
- 2: 2x10 repetitions.
- 3: 2x10 repetitions.

Objectives:

- Strengthen the intrinsic foot musculature.
- Strengthen the muscles: posterior tibialis, anterior tibialis, gastrocnemius, and soleus.
- Improve balance and proprioception.
- Improve ankle stability.

Book an appointment with Dr. Jordi Jiménez. He will see you at the Palma de Mallorca center and help you recover your quality of life.

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