

Condition of the Month

What Causes Pain in the Arch?

Pain in the arch of the foot is quite common. Adults and kids are equally prone to pain here. In kids, flat feet are most often the foot type that causes arch pain whereas in adults, high arches can also be the culprit.

Arch pain can occur because of an injury, but most often that isn't the cause. Having a job that involves standing all day predisposes one to pain in this part of the foot. The symptoms can be aching, sharpness, cramping, or throbbing sensations.

There are several causes of arch pain but three of the most common are...

Tendinitis

There are a few tendons that attach to bones near the arch of the foot. One of them can get strained causing pain with every step.

Someone with flat arches (Flatfeet) is more prone to straining one of these tendons. The pain can occur in the arch or bottom of the foot, the inside of the ankle or the top of the foot.

Pinched Nerve

Just like Carpal Tunnel in the hand, a nerve in the foot can get pinched causing pain in the arch. The term is Tarsal Tunnel. The nerve gets pinched just below the ankle but the pain can radiate into the arch.

The symptoms of a pinched nerve are sharpness, aching, cramping or pins and needles. Pain from a pinched nerve can be bothersome even when sitting or lying down, unlike pain from a tendon, ligament or bone.

Plantar Fasciitis

This condition is much more common in the heel but can occur in the arch. A person with a low or high arch can strain the plantar fascia. Usually, the pain is very localized to the arch as opposed to the other two conditions note here.

A lump can develop in the arch causing pain from being barefoot or certain shoes. This is known as a Plantar Fibroma. It's a form of a tumor but not cancerous. Any lump on the foot should be checked for the possibility of something more serious than a benign lesion.

Arthritis, stress fractures, ligament tears and bunions are some of the other more common causes of arch pain.

The recommendations we have for someone with arch pain consist of trying a new or different pair of shoes, temporarily refrain from weight-bearing exercise, apply ice and avoid being barefoot on hard surfaces. Sometimes, an inexpensive pair of soft inserts can be helpful. Of course, a few weeks of unresponsive pain is best addressed by a specialist. We can usually relieve arch pain with simple remedies, as long as the condition isn't chronic.