

Morning Stretch Routine

For Plantar Fasciitis — Do Before Your First Steps

5 Minutes · Every Morning · No Equipment Needed

Why morning pain happens: During sleep your plantar fascia shortens and tightens. The first steps of the day suddenly stretch it under load, causing the sharp stabbing pain. These stretches, done **before** your feet touch the floor, break that cycle and significantly reduce start-up pain.

5 minutes Total routine time

4 stretches All you need

Every morning

Non-negotiable

The Golden Rule

Do these four stretches **BEFORE** your feet touch the floor every morning.

Keep a towel or resistance band on your bedside table so you have no excuse.

This single daily habit — done consistently — is one of the most effective things you can do for plantar fasciitis recovery.

Source: Royal Berkshire NHS Physiotherapy Department

The 4-Step Morning Routine at a Glance

Step	Stretch	When	Reps	Hold
1	Plantar Fascia Stretch	In bed — before standing	3 reps	30 seconds
2	Towel / Band Stretch	In bed or sitting up	3 reps	30 seconds
3	Calf Stretch (upper)	Standing at a wall	3 reps	30 seconds
4	Calf Stretch (lower)	Standing at a wall	3 reps	20–30 seconds

Pain Scale — Before You Start

Use a 0 to 10 pain scale. Stop or reduce if pain exceeds 5 out of 10.

Mild discomfort of 3 to 4 out of 10 is acceptable.

Source: East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust

Medical Disclaimer

This guide is for general information only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Always consult your GP, NHS physiotherapist or podiatrist before starting a new exercise programme. Not suitable if you have diabetes with foot complications, circulatory conditions or are in your third trimester of pregnancy without prior guidance from your clinician.

PART 1: DO THESE IN BED — BEFORE YOU STAND UP

The two most important stretches. Do them every morning without exception.

These two stretches are done sitting in bed or on the edge of the bed. The goal is to stretch the plantar fascia and calf **before** your foot takes any body weight. This is the most impactful part of the entire routine.

1 Plantar Fascia Stretch

■ 3 reps × 30
seconds = 90
seconds

- 1 Sit up in bed (or on the edge of the bed).
- 2 Cross the affected foot over your other knee so the sole of the foot faces you.
- 3 Using both hands, grasp your toes firmly and pull them back toward your shin.
- 4 You should feel a clear, firm stretch along the arch of your foot.
- 5 Hold for 30 seconds. Release slowly. Repeat 3 times on the affected foot.
- 6 If both feet are affected, do 3 reps on each foot.

■ **Tip:** Place a resistance band or towel on your bedside table the night before so it is ready. This removes any barrier to doing the stretch before getting up.

✓ Sourced from: Royal Berkshire NHS Physiotherapy Department

2 Towel or Resistance Band Stretch

■ 3 reps × 30
seconds = 90
seconds

- 1 Sit up in bed with your leg stretched straight out in front of you.
- 2 Loop a towel, dressing gown cord or resistance band around the ball of your foot.
- 3 Hold both ends of the towel and gently pull toward you, keeping your knee straight.
- 4 You will feel a stretch in the arch and up through the calf simultaneously.
- 5 Hold for 30 seconds. Release slowly. Repeat 3 times.
- 6 This can also be done while still lying down — hold the towel and pull the foot toward you with the knee straight.

■ **Tip:** Keep a folded towel or resistance band in your bedside drawer permanently. Doing this stretch while still in bed — before standing — gives the best result.

✓ Sourced from: Lincolnshire Community Health NHS Trust

After These Two Stretches:

Swing your legs to the side of the bed. Put your feet into supportive slippers or shoes BEFORE your feet touch the floor. Never walk barefoot on hard floors with plantar fasciitis. Then stand up and move to the wall for Steps 3 and 4.

PART 2: STANDING STRETCHES — AT THE WALL

Do these immediately after getting up. Use a wall or door frame for support.

These two calf stretches address the tight calf muscles that are one of the biggest drivers of plantar fasciitis. They target two different calf muscles — the gastrocnemius (upper) and soleus (lower) — and both need to be done.

3 Gastrocnemius Calf Stretch (Upper Calf)

■ 3 reps × 30
seconds = 90
seconds

- 1 Stand facing a wall with your hands flat against it at shoulder height.
- 2 Place the affected foot behind you with the heel completely flat on the floor.
- 3 Keep the back knee straight. Both feet should point directly forward.
- 4 Lean your body gently toward the wall until you feel a clear stretch in the upper calf of the back leg.
- 5 Hold for 30 seconds. Release. Repeat 3 times on each leg.

■ **Tip:** The stretch should be felt in the meaty upper part of the calf — not behind the knee and not near the ankle. If you feel it near the ankle, move your foot slightly closer to the wall.

✓ Sourced from: Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust

4 Soleus Calf Stretch (Lower Calf)

■ 3 reps × 20–30
seconds = 90
seconds

- 1 Take the same position as Step 3 — hands on wall, affected foot behind you.
- 2 This time, bend both knees slightly — front knee and back knee.
- 3 You should feel the stretch move to the lower calf, closer to the ankle.
- 4 Hold for 20 to 30 seconds. Release. Repeat 3 times on each leg.

■ **Tip:** This is a subtler stretch than Step 3 but equally important. The soleus is the deeper calf muscle and has a direct connection to the Achilles tendon and plantar fascia. Many people skip this one — do not.

✓ Sourced from: University Hospitals Plymouth NHS FT

Total Morning Routine Time

Step 1	Plantar Fascia Stretch (in bed)	3 × 30 sec	~90 seconds
Step 2	Towel Stretch (in bed)	3 × 30 sec	~90 seconds
Step 3	Gastrocnemius Calf Stretch	3 × 30 sec	~90 seconds
	Soleus Calf Stretch	3 × 30 sec	~90 seconds

	Put on supportive shoes before standing		~30 seconds
TOTAL			~5–6 minutes

ALSO DO THIS THROUGHOUT THE DAY

The morning routine is the most important — but these habits reinforce it.

Before sitting down after your morning routine	Roll a frozen water bottle under your arch for 5 minutes. Combines ice therapy with massage
During every break at work	Do a seated plantar fascia stretch (Step 1) when you sit down after any period of standing or walking
Before standing up from any long rest	If you have been sitting for more than 20 minutes do the plantar fascia stretch (Step 1) before standing
After any prolonged walking or standing	Do the full 4-step routine again in the evening. Twice-daily stretching produces significantly better results
At bedtime	Consider a night splint or Strassburg sock. These keep the plantar fascia gently stretched overnight

4-Week Morning Routine Tracker

Tick each stretch as you complete it. Print more copies as needed.

Research consistently shows that tracking compliance improves outcomes. Tick the box as soon as you finish each stretch — before you get up.

Week	Step	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Week 1	1 — PF Stretch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2 — Towel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3 — Upper Calf	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4 — Lower Calf	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 2	1 — PF Stretch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2 — Towel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3 — Upper Calf	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4 — Lower Calf	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 3	1 — PF Stretch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2 — Towel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3 — Upper Calf	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4 — Lower Calf	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Week 4	1 — PF Stretch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2 — Towel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3 — Upper Calf	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4 — Lower Calf	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

■ = not yet done ✓ = completed | Print additional copies for weeks 5–12 of the full programme.

BEDSIDE QUICK REFERENCE — PRINT AND KEEP THIS BY YOUR BED

Cut out or fold and keep on your bedside table.

Before your feet touch the floor — every morning

1	Plantar Fascia Stretch	Cross foot over knee. Pull toes back. 3 reps x 30 sec.
	Towel Stretch	Towel around ball of foot. Pull toward you. 3 reps x 30 sec.
3	Gastrocnemius Stretch	Hands on wall. Back knee straight. 3 reps x 30 sec each leg.
	Soleus Stretch	Same position. Both knees slightly bent. 3 reps x 20–30 sec each leg.
→	Put on supportive shoes	Before feet touch the floor. No barefoot on hard floors.

When to See Your GP

- See your GP if pain is severe and stopping daily activities.
- See your GP if pain has not improved after 2 to 3 weeks of consistent stretching.
- See your GP if the heel is swollen, red or hot to touch.
- See your GP if you have numbness or tingling in the foot.
- NHS physiotherapy self-referral is available in many areas — no GP needed.

Signs This Routine Is Working

- Morning pain that is less severe and settles more quickly.
- Reduced tenderness when you press the underside of the heel.
- Fewer flare-ups later in the day.
- Measure improvement week by week — not day by day. Progress is not linear.

Clinical Sources

Royal Berkshire NHS Physiotherapy Department (July 2023) · Lincolnshire Community Health NHS Trust · Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust · University Hospitals Plymouth NHS FT · East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust · NIHR Evidence — Best Practice Guide for Plantar Heel Pain (2021) · NICE Clinical Knowledge Summary — Plantar Fasciitis (2020)

plantarfasciitisrecovery.co.uk

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