

My Personal Plantar Fasciitis Cure Paul Krueger, Ph.D.

FULL DISCLAIMER: I AM NOT A MEDICAL DOCTOR. BELOW IS A DESCRIPTION OF WHAT I DID TO EXPLORE TREATMENTS FOR MY OWN PERSONAL MEDICAL CONDITION. EVERY PERSON IS DIFFERENT, SO MY SOLUTION MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR YOU. USE THIS INFORMATION AT YOUR OWN DISCRETION AND IN CONSULTATION WITH YOUR OWN PHYSICIAN.

My story starts in April 2015. I was beginning to practice for the start of the golf season and had severe foot pain after hitting a bucket of balls. My family physician referred me to an orthopedist who took X-rays and diagnosed me with plantar fasciitis and osteoarthritis for which he suggested surgery to scrape the joints with a projected 6-week recovery period. Alternatively he suggested a cortisone shot for temporary pain relief. Thankfully I decided to look for alternatives first.

I found a website that told me more about the causes of plantar fasciitis being associated with what were described as trigger points (sort of hard lumpy nodes) in the fascia. These can occur in places that are very far removed from the apparent “source” of the pain (i.e. where you feel it is). So the pain associated with plantar fasciitis may be caused by trigger points close to the calves or hamstring muscles. I felt I was making progress by finding points where I could do deep massage that seemed to relieve the immediate pain. The primary thing I concluded was that there was some real relief of the foot pain that could be gained from deep massage in an area in my calf muscle. But the pain came back fairly quickly after the massage was stopped. I also experimented with other pain avoidance techniques like taping the foot that were also recommended but clearly these were not a long-term solution.

Next I decided to learn more about fascia physiology. Basically, fascia is the fibrous connective tissue that runs throughout your body. Nerves and blood vessels run through it and all muscles connect to it. You have to be careful if you research this yourself on-line because there is a fair amount of non-scientific mumbo-jumbo out there that has to do with how to find and “release” trigger points in the fascia. One big problem with all these theories is that it seems like only expert practitioners can make a good guess about what sort of massage is required to relieve particular sorts of pain.

Some of the proponents of various sorts of manipulation of the fascia referred to the trigger points as distortions in the fascia caused by imbalanced pulling on it by muscles. Their claim was that by massaging those muscles they could relieve the imbalance and eliminate the kinks in the fascia. I have no idea whether that is a medically valid idea, but I was willing to explore that theory to see where it took me, especially since I knew with certainty that deep massage of such points could provide temporary pain relief.

What eventually occurred to me was that it would be better to prevent these trigger points from forming in the first place rather than trying to get rid of them after the fact. Searching for fascia balancing techniques eventually led me to Essentrics (see their beginner’s page: <https://essentrics.com/Beginners.html>). Their theory is that what you

want exercise to do is to attain a well-balanced musculature and that doing so only requires relatively mild forms of exercise that doesn't require the use of heavy weights or other exercise devices. That's quite a contrast to most exercise regimes that tend to strengthen selected sets of muscles and ignore others. At the time that I started with them, they weren't really touting their method as a route to fascia health, but I learned recently (spring 2019) that they are now doing just that.

I started out with the two-DVD package for posture, pain-relief, mobility, and bone-strengthening. The foot exercises (especially in the mobility and bone-strengthening workouts) were a god-send and improvement came at a steady pace. I think too many people want an instant fix for problems, but patience and discipline paid off. I have been doing two 30-minute workouts per day more or less every day since I started in 2015.

Within a couple of weeks I found that I could play golf, although I had to ride a cart and found myself in some pain after. Within another few weeks I found that the pain was less after golf and was relieved fairly quickly with the right exercise. A few weeks after that I was back to walking the course and before the end of the year my foot pain was completely gone and I could play without any pain afterwards. My point is that you have to work at it for a while before the benefits are really apparent and the gradual improvement continues for a fairly long time. And you can't quit once you're back to feeling good; constant maintenance is required.

A big change has occurred in the sort of shoes I wear. I had been using various sorts of orthopedic supports in all my shoes (some at the recommendation of my doctor) to "provide proper support" for my feet. But what I discovered was that what I really needed was to strengthen the muscles in my feet and legs as well as gain ligament and tendon strength and flexibility. As I gained back natural strength, I found that not only did I not need orthopedic supports, using them actually caused pain to occur. All my shoes now have flat insoles and my own natural foot strength and flexibility support my feet just fine. I've discovered some shoe brands that specialize in provided shoes of this sort.

I knew that I had made real progress the day I walked down a hill and stepped in a hole that caused one ankle to twist in a very unnatural direction. Not only did it recover almost immediately, but there was no swelling or subsequent pain of any sort. I credit that to the flexibility and strength I had gained through my Essentrics exercises.

Somewhere during the exercise process the plantar fasciitis completely disappeared. The joint pain has also evaporated. Even my toes seem to be straighter and more aligned than they were previously. I have tried additional Essentrics videos, but keep going back to the basics since they seem to work well for my particular problem areas. I've seen improvements in balance and muscle tone as well. Even a diagnosed gout problem in one elbow vanished while I wasn't paying attention. I have recommended Essentrics to many family and friends. My family doctor was very surprised when I told him that the key to relieving the plantar fasciitis was exercising barefoot.