

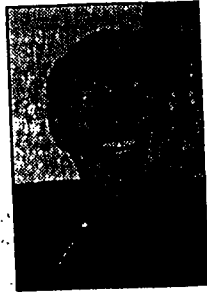
November 3, 2002

Spurred to "Heel"

Plantar fasciitis or heel spur affects one out of every 20 people at one time or another. A high or flattened arch is the underlying cause. Heel pain upon standing after lying or sitting is the symptom.

If x-rays are taken, a "spur" is noted on the heel. This is an epiphe-

nomenon, and despite how tempting it may be to think it is the spur causing the problem, it is the problem causing the spur. The spur is at the point of the wide tendon attaching the ball of the foot to the heel. Usually both heels have the spur, even



**DR. J.E
BLOCK**

ALL THINGS
MEDICAL

though only one heel has symptoms. (Remotely, the pain can be caused by a stress fracture, or even more rare, a tumor.)

The treatment includes decreasing the stress by using the heel as little as possible. Good shoe gear is essential. Wear shoes that have a very soft sole, insert and inexpensive support that has a hole in the center filled with a softer gel and those built with straight lasts rather than curved ones. It will also help to do special exercises.

The first exercise is done by standing two feet from a wall, leaning forehead on the wall, then lifting high up on the toes and back down to the heels. A second one can be done by standing with the ball of the foot on the edge of a stair, then raising and lowering the heel.

These are best done first thing upon arising and repeated five or six times during the day.

Other treatments such as

ibuprofen and ice are recommended. Stand on a 12-ounce plastic bottle that has been filled three-quarters with water and frozen. Rocking and rolling it back and forth massages the bottom of the foot. More aggressive therapy is done with the injection of a small amount of cortisone with lidocaine into the area of inflammation.

Shockwaves produced by a device similar to the one used to dissolve kidney stones is the best therapy, and unfortunately also the most expensive, costing between \$8,000 and \$10,000 per treatment.

In most cases, treatment is not expensive or lengthy, and the sooner started, the better. My success rate is over 98 percent in several 100 patients, including myself. If left untreated, plantar fasciitis can cause a limp or problems to the knee and hip due to favoring a painful foot.