

HEEL CORD STRETCHING

Importance of Stretching. Regular stretching is necessary to restore your ankle’s range of motion and strength. A stiff joint is a painful joint and the first step is to decrease pain and inflammation and improve range of motion (ROM). In order to remain pain free longterm, you must incorporate stretching into your daily routine and lifestyle. Stretching is critical not only to the health of our Notre Dame athletes but also for our active young and aging patients!

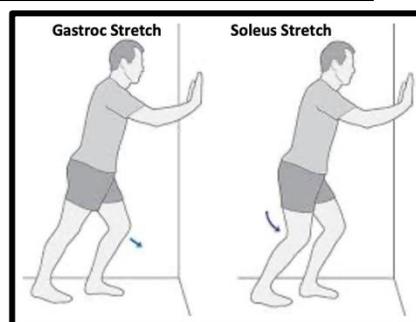
Before You Start. The following guide can help you better understand your stretching home exercise program that may be performed at home. You should Rest, Ice, Compress (with an elastic bandage), and Elevate your knee (R.I.C.E.). When the Achilles tendon is inflamed, it can tighten and cause discomfort. It is important to perform stretching activities on a daily basis and take anti-inflammatories as instructed by your orthopaedic surgeon to reduce pain and inflammation. Occasionally surgery is necessary for heel cord pathology (e.g. plantar fasciitis, achilles tendonitis) that does not improve with stretching, modifications in footwear, and anti-inflammatories.



HEEL CORD & PLANTAR FASCIA SPECIFIC EXERCISES

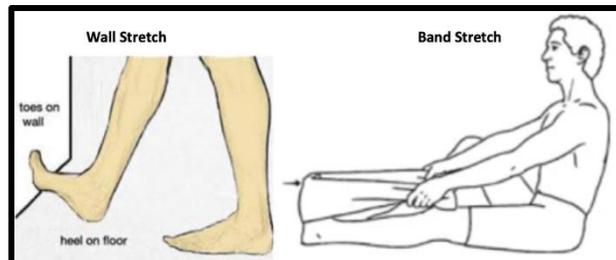
1. Gastroc & Soleus Stretch (Hold 30 Seconds, Repeat 5 times)

The runner’s stretch, or calf stretch, will provide relief by loosening the tendon. To do this exercise, you will need a wall or other support, such as a chair. Place your hands on the wall or chair. If using a wall, put your hands at eye level. **Gastroc Stretch.** Keep the leg that you want to stretch behind you. Keep your back heel on the floor and turned slightly outward. Lean toward until gentle stretch is felt in calf. **Soleus Stretch.** Stand with both knees bent and involved foot back. Gently lean into wall until gentle stretch is felt in calf. Don’t lean so far that you feel pain. Hold for 30 seconds.



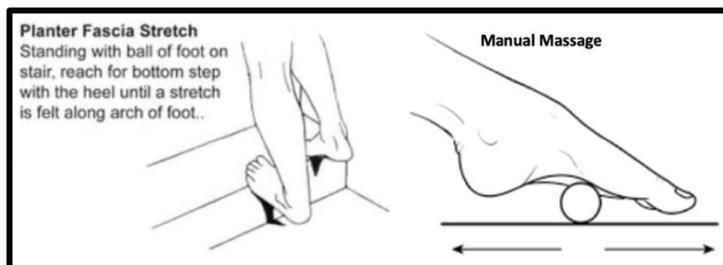
2. Toe-to-wall stretch (Hold 30 Seconds, Repeat 5 times)

The toe-to-wall stretch is ideal if the runner’s stretch makes your shoulders uncomfortable. It places less pressure on the upper body. Like the runner’s stretch, this exercise helps mobility by reducing stress on the Achilles tendon. Stand facing the wall and place your toes up and against the wall. The higher you place your toes, the deeper the stretch. Lean forward, keeping your heel on the floor. (Your other leg is behind you, toes forward and heel on ground.) Alternatively, you may use theraband or towel to pull your toes towards you and stretch your Achilles. Hold for 30 seconds.



3. Plantar Fascia Stretch (Hold 30 Seconds, Repeat 5 times)

Standing with the ball of foot on stair, reach for bottom step with the heel until a stretch is felt along arch of foot. Take care to hold railing for balance. This is typically the most effective. Alternatively, you may utilize foam roll or hard round surface to massage and stretch plantar fascia.



It is not uncommon for your pain level to slightly increase during the first week of exercising. Continue the program for a minimum of 4 weeks. At the end of 4 weeks, if you do not notice improvement in your condition consult your physician or therapist. If your pain is diminishing, continue the program for 2 - 3 weeks after your symptoms have ceased to ensure the condition does not return.

Consult with your physical therapist or doctor if you experience an increase in your symptoms with recommended exercises, or if you develop new symptoms of numbness, tingling or a spread of the pain. This information is not intended to diagnose or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult your doctor.

Developed in conjunction with the physicians at South Bend Orthopaedics