

Tarsal Tunnel Syndrome Exercises Handout

Tarsal tunnel syndrome is caused by the compression of the posterior tibial nerve as it passes through the tarsal tunnel near the ankle. This condition can result from ankle sprains, overuse, arthritis, or diabetes. Symptoms include pain, swelling, and difficulty walking. Proper exercises can help alleviate pain, reduce swelling, and promote healing. The following exercises are designed to be gentle and progressive, ensuring the safe rehabilitation of your ankle.

1. Calf stretches

Purpose: Reduce tightness in ankle muscles, relieve stress and swelling.

Steps:

1. Stand facing a wall, with your palms flat against it, shoulder-width apart.
2. Step your injured leg behind you and lock that knee, keeping the heel close to the floor.
3. Step forward with your other leg and bend that knee. Feel a gentle stretch in the back of your injured leg. Hold for twenty seconds, then return to neutral.

Frequency: 3-5 times daily, repeat with both legs if necessary.

2. Posterior tibialis heel lifts

Purpose: Strengthen and stretch the posterior tibialis tendon, reduce swelling.

Steps:

1. Stand in front of a chair or counter, placing your hands on the back or edge for support.
2. Slowly rise onto your toes, using the support. Hold the “tip-toe” position for five seconds.
3. Release the support and slowly lower back to the ground.

Frequency: 15 times per set, 2 sets per day.

3. Plantar stretches

Purpose: Relieve swelling and tension in the foot.

Steps:

1. Sit on the floor with legs stretched out in front, toes pointing up.
2. Wrap a towel, jump rope, or exercise band around the ball of your foot. Bend the knee slightly.
3. Gently pull the top of your foot toward your body until you feel a stretch in the heel and calf. Hold for twenty seconds.

Frequency: 3-5 times daily with one or both legs.

4. Ankle rotations

Purpose: Maintain flexibility and range of motion in the ankle.

Steps:

1. Sit on a chair and lift your injured leg off the ground.
2. Slowly rotate your ankle clockwise five times.
3. Rotate your ankle counterclockwise five times.

Frequency: 2-3 times daily with both legs if necessary.

5. Pencil lifts

Purpose: Strengthen foot and ankle muscles to support tendons.

Steps:

1. Sit or stand next to a counter, placing a pencil on the floor in front of you.
2. Use your toes to pick up the pencil with your injured foot.
3. Hold the pencil in the air for ten seconds, then release and relax.

Frequency: 3-5 times daily.

Reference

WebMD. (2023). *Exercises to ease tarsal tunnel syndrome*. <https://www.webmd.com/pain-management/carpal-tunnel/exercises-tarsal-tunnel-syndrome>