

Plantar Fascitis and Plantar Aponeurosis: An Integrated Approach in the Training Room

By Ronda Wimmer, PhD, MS, LAc, ATC, CSCS, CSMS, SPS

Western Perspective

Plantar fascitis is inflammation of the plantar fascia located on the sole of the foot. Pain is generated at the attachment of the fascia near the medial tubercle on the calcaneus.

The injury can be caused by overuse as a result of excessive loading, wearing shoes with inadequate support and/or cushioning. Pain is located on the bottom of the foot, and is worse in the morning and with walking.

To treat plantar fascitis and plantar aponeurosis from a Western perspective, one must understand the injury mechanism: an overcontracted muscle progressing through tendonitis stages of severity. Once this is accomplished, one prioritizes whether to treat the inflammation or the cause. Ice, ultrasound at 20 percent intensity (for its non-thermal effect), MENS (microcurrent electrical stimulation) units and anti-inflammatory drugs can be used to reduce swelling. One aspect that must be taken into account is whether the practitioner wants to treat a symptom or take care of what is causing the muscle to contract. Although it may be more important to address the cause in some instances, treating the inflammation might be the only option if a time frame is involved. Once the cause is identified, heat can be applied in the form of ultrasound at 100 percent intensity, stretching, rest and massage.

TCM Perspective

According to traditional Chinese medicine, the bottom of the foot can be related to many patterns of differentiation such as wind, cold, heat and damp (six external pathogens), *qi*/blood stagnation in the channels, *qi*/blood deficiency, and Kidney *jing*/essence deficiency.

The deficiency conditions generally relate to weak constitution, overstrain, poor eating habits, and prolonged chronic diseases. Excessive bleeding may be specific to blood deficiency, and specific Kidney deficiency may be caused by excessive sexual activity and multiple pregnancies. When the *qi* and blood become deficient, they cannot properly perform their functions of movement and nourishment. Thus, the affected target areas are the channels, bones, muscles and tendons. When the Liver and Kidney become deficient, they can perform neither their primary nor supporting functions, and rely upon the *jing*/essence for support. This causes *jing*/essence deficiency, which in turn cannot nourish the muscles, tendons and bones.

Pain Association

Excess Conditions		Deficient Conditions	
TCM Diagnosis	Type	TCM Diagnosis	Type
<i>Stagnation</i> <i>Qi/Blood</i>	Pain is fixed, stabbing, and/or aggravated at night, alleviated by movement	<i>Qi Deficiency</i>	Aggravated by being tired and fatigued, over exertion, better with rest
<i>Wind Cold</i> <i>Damp</i>	Acute, aggravation of pain by wind, cold, humid weather, heavy cold extremities	<i>Blood Deficiency</i>	Numbness, aggravated around menses onset
<i>Damp Heat</i>	Swelling, hot/heavy sensation, redness, aggravated by warmth, better with cold	<i>Kidney Jing Deficiency</i>	Worse with being tired and better with rest.

Excess conditions generally tend to be related either through the Spleen's function of transportation of obstructions (transformation transportation) and/or *qi* and blood. The Spleen, located in the middle *jiao*, tends to get congested through poor eating habits and consumption of excessive cold or spicy foods, which allows dampness to accumulate. Dampness creates an obstruction, the severity of which is dependent upon the length of the obstruction. Over time, this damp accumulation affects the flow of the *qi* and blood, and creates deficiency. Another scenario is the *qi* and blood becoming stagnation due to acute injuries (trauma, operations, infections, etc.). This creates a sudden blockage, restricting the normal flow of *qi*/blood, affecting the muscles and tendons.

Acupuncture/Formula Patents/Treatments

Excess Conditions	Deficient Conditions
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TCM Diagnosis	Points	TCM Diagnosis	Points
<p>Stagnation Qi/Blood <i>Jin Gu Die Da</i> Wan (muscle bone injury pills) <i>Xiao Huo Luo</i> <i>Dan</i> (minor invigorate the collaterals special pill)</p>	<p>LI 4/LV 3 - Source points, eliminate blood stagnation, increase circulation of <i>qi</i>, decrease/relieve pain SI 4 - Source point GB 34 - Sea point, strengthens tendons, relieves pain ST 3 - Stream point SP 6 - crossing point 3 Yin channels of the foot, eliminates stagnation, increases blood circulation UB 60 - eliminates blood stagnation in greater yang channels, increases blood circulation</p>	<p>Qi Deficiency <i>Bu Zhong Yi Qi Wan</i> (tonify middle benefit the <i>qi</i> pill)</p>	<p>K 3, LV 3, UB 64 - Source points, strengthen bones/tendons, tonify Liver/Kidney ST 36 - Sea point, promotes production of <i>qi</i>, tonifies Spleen/Stomach SP 6 - crossing point 3 yin channels of the foot, eliminates stagnation, increases blood circulation UB 60 - eliminates blood stagnation in greater yang channels, increases blood circulation SI 4 - Source point</p>

<p>Wind Cold</p> <p>Damp</p> <p><i>Tian Ma Qu</i></p> <p><i>Feng Bu Pian</i> (gastrodia dispel wind)</p> <p><i>Feng Shi Pian</i> (wind damp)</p>	<p>LI 4 - Source point, dispel external pathogens</p> <p>UB 64, SI 4 - Source points, eliminate damp, promote urination, dispel wind</p> <p>SI 3 - Stream point</p> <p>UB 63 - Accumulation point</p> <p>SJ 5 - Connecting point</p> <p>LV 3 - Source/stream point</p> <p>SP 6 - crossing point 3 yin channels of the foot, eliminates stagnation, increases blood circulation Moxa warms channels, dispels cold (LI 4, SI 3, SI 4, UB 64, UB 63, SJ 5)</p>	<p>Blood Deficiency</p> <p><i>Ba Zhen Wan</i> (eight precious pill)</p>	<p>GB 39 - Gathering point for marrow, strengthens bone/tendons</p> <p>GB 34 - Gathering point for tendons</p> <p>R 16 - Tonifies <i>qi</i>, tonifies <i>jing</i></p> <p>SI 4 - Source point</p> <p>SI 3 - Stream point</p> <p>K 3, LV 3 - Source points, strengthen bones/tendons, tonify Liver/Kidney</p> <p>ST 36 - Sea point, promotes production of <i>qi</i>, tonifies Spleen/Stomach</p> <p>SP 6 - crossing point 3 Yin channels of the foot, eliminates stagnation, increases blood circulation</p>
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Damp Heat	UB 64, SI 4 - Source points, eliminate damp, promote urination	Kidney Jing Deficiency	LV 8, K 10 - Sea points together with LV 3, K 3 - Source points - both tonify Liver/Kidney, strengthen bones/tendons and benefit Kidney <i>jing</i>
<i>Feng Shi Xiao</i>		<i>Du Huo Ji Sheng</i>	
<i>Tong Wan</i>	GB 34, SP 9 - Sea points, eliminate damp heat in lower <i>jiao</i>	<i>Wan</i>	
(wind damp dispel pain pill)	SI 3 - Stream point	(angelica pubescens-loranthus pill)	
<i>San Miao San</i>	UB 63 - Accumulation point		K 5 - Accumulation point and K 4 - Connecting point both tonify <i>qi</i> /blood circulation in Kidney channel and harmonize collaterals
(three marvel pill)	K 2 - Spring point, eliminates damp heat in lower <i>jiao</i> , clears heat, promotes urination		UB 64 - Source point, increases blood/ <i>qi</i> circulation in the Urinary Bladder channel
	SJ 6 - eliminates damp heat		SP 6 - crossing point 3 yin channels of the foot, eliminates stagnation, increases blood circulation
	SP 6 - crossing point 3 yin channels of the foot, eliminates stagnation, increases blood circulation		

The result of the TCM patterns of differentiation reflects the physiological manifestations within the Western paradigm.

There are more formulas and other acupuncture point combinations that are also effective; this is just one perspective.

In summary, to understand treating sports injuries specific to plantar fasciitis and/or plantar aponeurosis is to understand jargon in both Western and Eastern arenas. Treating with TCM is extremely effective when applied in conjunction with TCM philosophy. The points and formulas are given as an example of what can possibly be used, not as the only method of use. There are a variety of points that can be combined when treating plantar conditions, along with a variety of herbal formula patents on the market. Acupuncture is like geometry. There are many different ways to develop your acupuncture prescription; the key is understanding which access route you choose and why, so you can modify your treatments accordingly. This is the beauty of Oriental medicine: getting results by thinking through the solution, and by being outside of the traditional box. Ultimately, our goal is to provide result-oriented outcomes for the patient. Educating patients and medical professionals preserves the integrity of our professional medical expertise.

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