

Foot Sense

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The Definitive Guide for Stopping Heel Pain in Hikers

As a Seattle hiker every year you look forward to summer. You know there's nothing like putting on your backpack, leaving the city behind, and taking in the wonders of the forest and the mountains. And this is particularly true now as we live through a pandemic—getting away from it all seems more important than ever.

That's why when you're having heel pain the idea of not being able to hike is so distressing. I've put together this definite guide for hikers prone to heel pain to empower you to prevent this condition from reoccurring. (over)

Grilled Greek Chicken Recipe

Try this delicious recipe next time you want a quick, grillable meal for your family.

For the marinade:

- 1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt (use full fat yogurt for best results)
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- zest of 1 lemon
- 1 tablespoon white balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons fresh oregano leaves, chopped (or 2 teaspoons dried)
- 1 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves, or 1 teaspoons dried
- 6 medium garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon Kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes

Directions:

Combine all the marinade ingredients in a large ziplock bag. Seal and massage the bag to combine all the ingredients. Add the chicken to the bag turning to coat. Marinate for 4-24 hours. Turn the bag a few times while marinating. Preheat gas grill to 400F or ensure that coals are grey and hot. Pour the marinated chicken pieces into a large strainer to remove the excess marinade. Thread chicken pieces onto the skewers alternating with peppers and onions. Grill until the chicken is cooked through, about 4 minutes on each side or until juices run clear.

Source: Saving Room for Dessert (<https://www.savingdessert.com/grilled-greek-chicken-recipe/>)



For the skewers:

- 3-4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into 2-inch pieces for skewers
- 1 large red bell pepper, seeded and cut into 1 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 medium red onion, cut into 1 1/2-inch cubes
- Soak skewers in water for 30 mins if using wood

As a [Seattle podiatrist](#) there's a lot I can do in my office to help alleviate your heel pain and prevent it from reoccurring. However, there's also a lot you can do to keep it at bay.

Shoes and Boots

One of the most important things you can do to prevent heel pain is to ensure you have hiking shoes or boots that provide the support and stability you need for the type of trails you hike on.

- Assess the type of hike you'll be doing and the amount of weight you'll be carrying before purchasing your shoes or boots. A lightweight hiking shoe may be perfect for an easy day hike with a lightweight pack but a heavy duty hiking boot will be needed if you're carrying a bunch of weight for overnights, doing hikes with more elevation gain, or tackling rougher terrain.
- Your shoes or boots should fit snugly but not too tightly and provide enough room in your toes so that you have wiggle room. Make sure to have your feet measured when purchasing your footwear.
- Take your foot type into account when purchasing shoes or boots. For example, if you have flat feet shoes and boots with good arch support are a must.
- Shop for shoes toward the late afternoon when feet tend to swell.
- Purchase socks at the same time you purchase boots to ensure a good fit.
- Make sure you break in new boots before you go hiking. While hiking shoes won't need break-in time, leather boots will.

Replace Your Insoles

Most shoes and boots have insoles that aren't supportive enough to prevent you from pronating and developing plantar fasciitis. Buy a high volume insole for a boot and a medium volume insole for a lightweight hiking shoe. Superfeet makes insoles specifically for hiking boots called [Trailblazers](#). Superfeet or another insole called [Powersteps](#) can be used in hiking shoes.

Increase Your Hiking Distance and Level of Difficulty Gradually

Since plantar fasciitis is a repetitive strain injury, it's important to build up to longer and more difficult hikes slowly. Your body needs time to adjust and will serve you much better if you take it easy at the start of hiking season.

Warm-ups and Stretching

While doing warm-ups and stretching is important for all hikers it's particularly important if you're prone to developing plantar fasciitis. Calf muscles can tighten up after sitting in a car for longer than an hour. At the very least perform the traditional standing calf stretch against a tree or even your car by putting one foot forward and then stepping back with the other foot. Place most of your weight on your back foot and slowly lean into the tree or car until you feel a stretch at the back of your calf. Hold for 30 secs to one minute.

For the full blog, "Stopping Heel Pain in Hikers" visit <https://drberg.us/painfreehiking>.



Should I Wear A Mask When Hiking?

You may be asking yourself if it's really necessary to wear a mask while hiking. After all you're outdoors, how much risk could there be? After reading several articles on the topic here's my take. If you're on a trail with your family or other people you live with and no one else is around, you can go without a mask.

However since trails are often very narrow and keeping a 6 feet distance is nearly impossible, when other people approach it's important to put on your mask.

Keep in mind, when you hike you're breathing more heavily than you would while standing around or walking. When you breathe harder you can release more virus into the air making it more likely to infect others.