

Questions

What are the chances of this happening to my other foot?

-There is an approximately 30% chance that this may happen to your other foot.

Will I eventually lose my foot?

- Not necessarily. The majority of patients with neuropathic complications do not require amputations.

Why not operate on my foot and make it normal again?

-When your foot collapses, the bones break into many little pieces that are impossible to fit together again

What is the role of surgery on my foot?

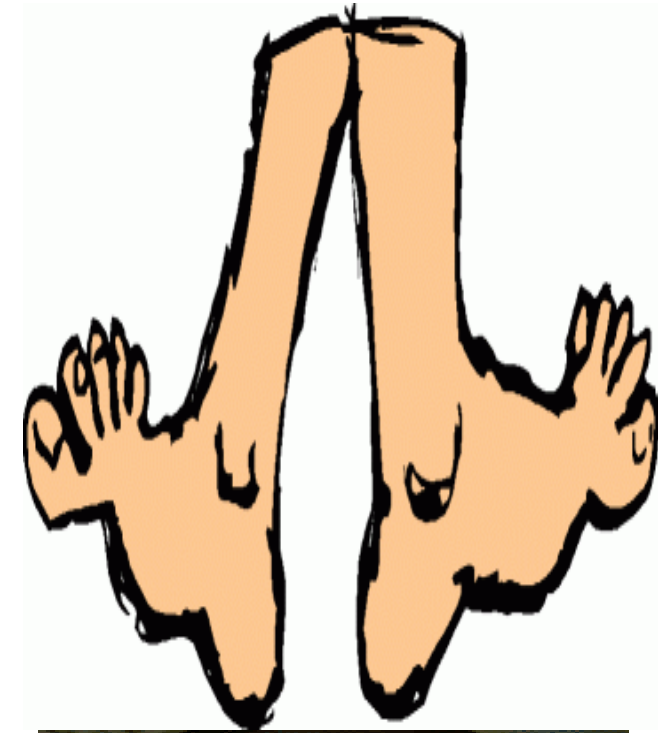
-Surgery is done to

- Realign a foot that will not fit in a brace
- To remove infected bone
- To stabilize a foot that continues to collapse
- To remove protruding bone so that an ulcer can heal.



Nunyara House
Specialist Medical Centre

Information Brochure: Charcot Foot



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My doctor says I have a Charcot Foot

What is a Charcot Foot?

A Charcot Foot is also called Charcot Arthropathy. It is a process by which the inside of the foot begins to collapse. There are 26 bones in your foot that are held together by strong ligaments. These ligaments hold the shape and arch of the foot in a normal position. When the ligaments begin to stretch and the bones begin to collapse, the normal shape of the foot will change. This process is usually accompanied by swelling and sometimes pain. This is what is happening to your foot.

How did I get a Charcot Foot?

There are many causes of a Charcot Foot, but the primary source is dysfunction of the nerves of the foot. When the nerves do not work properly you lose the protective sensation of your foot. If you do not have protective sensation in the foot, your body cannot recognize when you are using the foot, standing too long or wearing improper shoes.



Charcot Foot with collapse of the arch of the foot.

The nerve problem also weakens the bones, ligaments and skin. As a result your foot cannot cope with the normal stresses of everyday activity. Although many diseases can cause nerve dysfunction, diabetes mellitus is the most common. High blood sugar levels contribute to the production of toxins, which damage the nerves in the body.

How do I manage my Charcot Foot?

Once a Charcot collapse of the foot has occurred, it cannot be reversed. Management is aimed at preventing further collapse of the foot and arch. Because you have lost the normal internal support of your foot, we will attempt to provide you with external support by way of custom-made orthotic shoes and braces. Without the extra external support, your foot is at risk for further collapse. If the foot collapses further, the bone can begin to protrude. The bones cause an increased pressure to the skin. The skin will eventually not be able to tolerate the pressure and an ulcer will form. It is very important that we prevent ulcers from forming. Your risk for amputation increases dramatically once an ulcer has formed.

The purpose of your orthotic brace is to prevent your foot from further collapse and prevent ulceration of your skin.

How do I manage my foot care with neuropathy?

Your body cannot tell when your foot is in danger and for this reason you have to be your own security guard for your feet. Here are a few simple tasks that are important to perform as part of your routine:

- Always check your shoes for foreign objects before you put them on



X ray of a Charcot Foot demonstrating destruction of the ankle

- Always wear a comfortable shoe that is wide. The top of the shoe should be soft.
- Never go barefoot.
- Keep your toenails trimmed at the same level as the skin on the end of your toe. Cut the nails straight, not curved at the end.
- Never test the bath water with your feet.
- Wash your feet once a day with soap and water. Dry thoroughly between your toes.
- Put lotion on your feet once a day.
- Change your socks twice a day.
- When you buy new shoes, break them in slowly. Check your feet frequently when you first start using them.
- Your diabetes specialist or general practitioner should check your feet at least once a year.
- If you have a brace or orthotics, wear this when you are up and active.
- If you have peripheral neuropathy it is very important to be reviewed by a podiatrist regularly.



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