

## Patient information

### Looking after your Charcot foot

#### Podiatry

#### What is Charcot foot?

Charcot foot is a very serious complication of diabetes that can develop if you have nerve damage (peripheral neuropathy) in your feet.

Charcot foot can make the bones of your foot become fragile, which means that they may break or dislocate easily, even if you don't injure them badly.

Most patients cannot recall injuring their feet at all. If you have damaged nerves in your feet, you may still be able to walk on your foot after injuring it without feeling any pain.

If this happens, your foot can become severely deformed. The shape of your foot will not return to normal, and this can make it very difficult to find shoes that fit properly.

It is important that you notice any problem early and get professional help.

**Note:** Any change to the shape of the foot increases the risk of foot ulcers.

#### How will I know if I've got Charcot foot?

The early signs of Charcot foot are swelling and warmth in the affected area of the foot or ankle.

There may be some redness, which is sometimes mistaken for infection. Usually there is no pain (because of nerve damage), but this is not always the case.

In most cases only one foot is affected. However, in some rare cases people can develop Charcot foot in both feet, although not at the same time.

Your foot may become deformed if you do not get appropriate treatment early enough and you continue to walk on it.

#### What is the aim of my treatment?

There are three important aims of treating Charcot foot.

- Preventing a permanent change to the shape of your foot
- Preventing future problems
- Reducing the risks to your limbs and life.

## **What will the treatment consist of?**

The only effective treatment is to reduce the weight or pressure on the foot to prevent the joint from moving or the foot deforming. This is done with some form of cast (in the same way as if you had broken a bone).

You will have to wear this cast up to three times longer than someone who does not have diabetes and who has suffered the same injury. The treatment you receive will depend on the method of treatment that your local specialist diabetes foot service prefers.

You will need regular appointments with a member of the specialist diabetes foot service to check the temperature of your foot.

You will have an X-ray when needed.

## **Treatment options**

- A plaster cast that your health care professional will regularly review and change when needed
- A cast walker with a prescription insole that your health care professional will regularly review

These methods of treating Charcot foot have been proven successful, but you will need to closely follow the advice you are given

## **What can I do to reduce my risk of developing problems?**

You should attend your appointments with a member of the specialist diabetic foot service.

If you have been provided with prescription footwear, these should be the only shoes you wear.

Prescription footwear can reduce the risk of ulcers and amputation but cannot remove the risk altogether.

## **How can I help my condition?**

You should follow the medical advice you are given. You will need to keep your weight off your foot as much as possible, as Charcot foot can be very disabling if it is not treated appropriately.

## **The following advice will help you manage your condition**

- Keep your diabetes under control by following the advice you have been given in the past.
- Keep checking both your feet between appointments with your specialist foot service.
- Follow the care and advice you have been given to protect your Charcot foot.

- Make sure you wear the correct footwear as there will be more pressure on your other foot which could cause a further problem.
- You can get advice from your specialist diabetes foot service about weight-bearing, and aids such as crutches, sticks and wheelchairs that can help keep the weight off your foot.

Your specialist diabetes foot service is here to support you, help you manage your Charcot foot, offer advice and answer any questions you may have.

### **When your condition has settled down**

Even with appropriate treatment there still may be some changes in the shape of your foot.

If you need prescription footwear and insoles, you will need to have regular check-ups with a podiatrist and maybe an orthotist with specialist training.

### **What should I do if I have a concern or problem with my feet?**

During your treatment, if you notice any of these signs you must contact a member of your Multi-disciplinary Foot Care Team, local Podiatry Department or GP for advice as soon as possible (within 24 hours).

- A red, hot, swollen toe or foot
- A new break or wound in the skin
- New redness or discolouration of your toe or foot
- New or unexplained pain in your foot

**If you discover any new breaks in the skin or blisters, cover them with a sterile dressing. Do not burst blisters.**

**If your Multi-disciplinary Foot Care Team, local Podiatry Department or GP are not available, and there is no sign of your foot healing within 24 hours, go to your local accident and emergency department.**

### **Feedback**

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

## Further information

### Royal Podiatry

Tel: 0150 706 2829

Text Phone 18001 0151 706 2829

### Aintree Podiatry

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