

### Charcot Foot

Charcot foot is a condition causing weakening of the bones in the foot that can occur in people who have significant nerve damage (neuropathy). The bones are weak enough to fracture, and with continued walking the foot eventually changes shape. As this progresses the joints collapse and the foot takes an abnormal shape such as a rocker bottom foot or a dislocatable foot.

Charcot foot is a very serious condition that can lead to severe deformity, disability, and even amputation. Since it is so significant is important that patient with diabetes (a disease often associated with neuropathy) take preventative measures and seek immediate care if signs or symptoms occur.

#### **Causes:**

Charcot foot develops as a result of neuropathy which decreases sensation and the ability to feel temperature and pain or even irregularities in balance. Because the patient can't feel anything he may continue to walk or run making the injury even worse and the destruction more significant.

Many given deformities make the condition worse such as a tight Achilles tendon or arthritis.

#### **Symptoms:**

Symptoms of Charcot may include warmth, redness, swelling, irregular shaped foot or even pain.

#### **Diagnosis:**

Early diagnosis of Charcot foot is extremely important for successful treatment. To arrive at a diagnosis the surgeon must examine the foot and ankle and the neurologic status of the patient.

This may require x-rays and other imaging studies. Once treatment begins x-rays are taken periodically to a new valuation of the status of the condition.

#### **Treatment:**

Non-surgical treatment for Charcot foot may consist of immobilization, custom shoes and bracing, activity modification and rest. Regulation of blood sugar if diabetic and other medical treatments may also be necessary.

In many cases it may be severe enough that surgery is necessary. The podiatric foot and ankle surgeon will determine the proper timing and the appropriate procedures for individual cases.



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