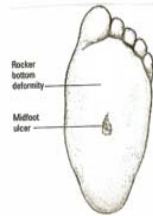


What is a Charcot Deformity?

Charcot, pronounced Shar-KO is a disease process that occurs in people that have insensate feet (no feeling). Dr. JM Charcot first described the destructive changes in joints that occur in the insensate foot or leg in the late 1800's. People who lack feeling in their feet often compound injuries because they are unable to sense that an injury has occurred. These injuries can include trauma, sprains, and broken bones. The Charcot joint or foot is usually a combination of many minor injuries that have occurred over time. The Charcot foot will eventually change its shape over time due to a destruction of the bones and joints of the foot. Once this disfigurement occurs, it can not be reversed.

Muscle strength in the feet and legs and the contractility (tone of the blood vessels) is decreased in the person with an insensate foot. As the person walks, the foot strikes the ground at a greater impact leading to increased injury. Decreased muscle tone also tends to lead to more frequent sprains. These patient's are unaware of these injuries and continue to walk which compounds the injuries, often leading to additional injuries.



What to Look for & What to do

The loss of tone to the blood vessels in the foot results in an increased blood flow. This actually leads to the removal of important minerals in the bones making them weaker. Tiny fractures occur in weakened bones very easily. Again, the person with the insensate foot will be unaware of this occurrence and will continue to walk on the foot, thereby increasing the number and severity of the fractures. The culmination of these repeated injuries lead to Charcot joints and deformity.

Signs & Symptoms

Pain is absent in the insensate foot so you must be aware of the other warning signs that an injury has occurred. If a bone is broken or a charcot joint has occurred, you will experience one or all of:

Increase in skin temperature at site of injury

Swelling, moderate or severe

Redness in the affected area

Dry skin over the area due to lack of sweating (sweat glands are often destroyed)

Structural change (foot becomes shorter and/or wider)

Most people wait until the last sign before seeking medical advice. You are encouraged to seek medical assistance if you have had any of the above signs or symptoms.

Treatment of Charcot joints

An untreated Charcot foot will eventually take on a rounded shape. This is called a rocker bottom because it resembles the shape of the base of a rocking chair. The arch collapses and the joints are destroyed. The best treatment of Charcot joints is prevention.

Visit your physician regularly

Wear supportive shoes that fit well. This usually requires a custom molded shoe made specifically for your foot



Inspect your feet daily

If prevention continues to fail, see your physician immediately. Once the severity is determined, you must put the foot at rest. This means no walking to prevent further injury. This often includes one or all of

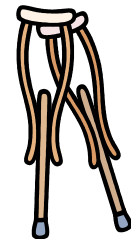
Custom shoes

Casts

Crutches

Wheelchair

Bed rest



Sometimes the injuries are severe enough that surgery is required to remove bony prominences to prevent ulcer formation.

When do I need to have someone look at my foot?

If you have experienced one or more of the signs and symptoms of a Charcot joint, you may benefit from the advice of a professional trained in treatment of this disease process.

If you have a wound that you do not know how you got.

If you notice a sore area with increased warmth and redness.

You notice a blister formation or purplish discoloration

If your wound does not show significant signs of healing or gets worse after the pressure is



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