

Charcot Foot

What is Charcot Foot?

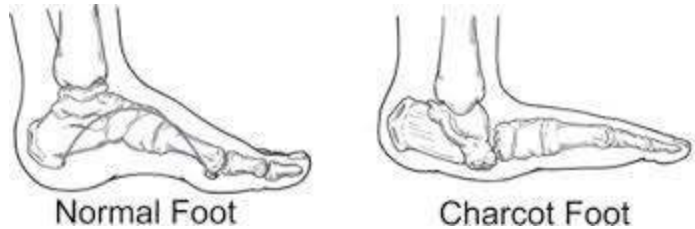
Charcot foot is a sudden softening of the bones in the foot that can occur in people who have significant nerve damage (neuropathy). The bones are weakened enough to fracture and with continued walking the foot eventually changes shape. As the disorder progresses, the arch collapses and the foot takes on a convex shape, giving it a rocker-bottom appearance, making it very difficult to walk.

Charcot foot is a very serious condition that can lead to severe deformity, disability and even amputation. Because of its seriousness, it is important that patients with diabetes- a disease often associated with neuropathy- take preventive measures and seek immediate care if signs or symptoms appear.

Symptoms

The symptoms of Charcot foot can appear after a sudden trauma or even a minor repetitive trauma

(such as a long walk). A sudden trauma includes such mishaps as dropping something on the foot or a sprain or fracture of the foot. The symptoms of Charcot foot are similar to those of infection. Although Charcot foot and infection are different conditions, both are serious problems requiring medical treatment.



Charcot foot symptoms may include:

- Warmth to the touch (the foot feels warmer than the other)
- Redness in the foot
- Swelling in the area
- Pain or soreness

What Causes Charcot Foot?

Charcot foot develops as a result of neuropathy, which decreases sensation and the ability to feel temperature, pain or trauma. When neuropathy is severe, there is a total lack of feeling in the feet. Because of neuropathy, the pain of an injury goes unnoticed and the patient continues to walk-making the injury worse.

People with neuropathy (especially those who have had it for a long time) are at a risk for developing Charcot foot. In addition, neuropathic patients with a tight Achilles tendon have been shown to have a tendency to develop Charcot foot.