

FACT SHEET

Club Foot

Club foot is a birth defect in which one or both feet are twisted out of shape or position.

The foot is turned inward and the bottom of the foot can face sideways or upward. The calf is often smaller and tight.

It is a common congenital deformity affecting 1 in 1000 children and boys twice more than girls.

It is not painful in infancy but the child will have trouble walking without treatment.

Treatment will include a combination of stretching, casting and bracing which should start soon after birth.

Without treatment, it will not improve and the child will end up walking on the outside of their foot and develop pain and activity limitations as a result.

Treatment is non surgical initially and the Ponseti method is used. This involves gentle stretching followed by long leg plaster casts which are used to hold the foot in a better position. This is changed every week for 6-8 weeks.

After casting some babies may require an Achilles tendon release and a further 3 weeks in a cast while this heals.

After casting club foot often recurs so usually they will wear a brace for a few years. Initially this is full time for 3 months and then gradually the time worn will decrease until it's just worn overnight.

Failure of the above may mean surgical correction is required.

Ponseti treatment will mean that the lower limb and pelvic strength will be affected and milestone achievement often affected/delayed due to restricted movement.

Appropriate exercises to improve your child's strength, range and function should be performed to help them catch up to their peers. Stretching and strengthening of the ligaments and muscles will help prevent it recurring. Physiotherapy can assist with this.

A baby's feet may turn inwards without it being club foot. This needs to be identified and treated differently by your physiotherapist.

