

What is a Clubfoot?

Clubfoot is a congenital deformity of one foot or both feet at birth. Characterized by the foot turning inwards, on its side, and sometimes even looking as if the foot is upside down the appearance of a clubfoot is unmistakable. Occurring in one out of 1000 births, it affects boys slightly more than girls.



What causes clubfeet?

The exact cause of clubfeet is unknown, but it is thought to have a genetic basis. If the parents or a sibling of a child has clubfeet, then a child is twice as likely to have clubfeet.

Treatment

While clubfoot is not a painful condition, without treatment it can lead to discomfort and a debilitating lifestyle by teenage years. The goal of early treatment is to correct and stabilize your child's clubfoot (or feet) by the time they start walking.

Treatment - It is best to start treatment as early as possible for a successful outcome. Non-surgical treatment options include the Ponseti method. It involves the stretching, casting, and bracing. With this treatment, a cast is applied each week as the doctor slowly stretches and moves the foot towards the proper position. Once the foot is in proper alignment, the child must wear a brace for the next two years to maintain the correction. The Ponseti method has been proven to be extremely effective, but it requires active participation of the parents to prevent recurrence. It may require a small surgery to finalize correction.



Surgical Treatment - Sometimes stretching, casts and bracing are not enough to correct a baby's clubfoot. Surgery is performed to rearrange the tendons, ligament and joints in the affected foot/ankle. Surgery is occasionally needed for highly resistant clubfoot that does not correct with casting. Clubfoot can partially reoccur in toddlers and may require a tendon transfer to rebalance the foot. Following surgery, the foot is casted to allow for healing and afterwards may involve the use of a brace. Proper brace use can reduce risk of reoccurrence.

With proper treatment a child will have a nearly normal foot. They will be able to play, and run without pain and wear normal shoes. Some slight differences between the clubfoot and the normal foot include the clubfoot being 1 to 1 1/2 size smaller and a little less mobile.