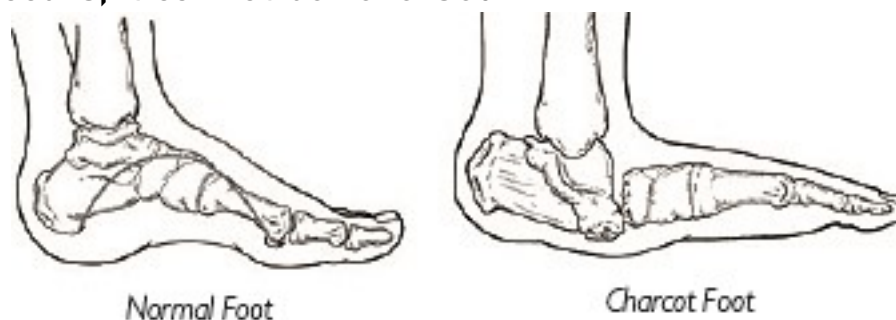


What is Charcot Deformity?

Charcot (pronounced Shar-KO) is a disease that occurs in people that do not have feeling in their feet (insensate). First described by Dr. JM Charcot in the late 1800's, Charcot deformity creates destructive changes in the joints of insensate feet and legs. People who have lost feeling in their feet and legs are more likely to compound injuries because they cannot feel that they have occurred. Injuries that are likely to compound are trauma, sprains, and broken bones. A 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 disfigurement occurs, it cannot be reversed.



The loss of muscle strength in the legs and feet and the decrease of tone in the blood vessels leads to more frequent sprains and other unnoticed injuries. The loss of tone in the vessels results in an increased blood flow which leads to the removal of important minerals in the bones, causing them to weaken. Tiny fractures form very easily. As the person has lost feeling in their feet, they are unaware of these injuries and will continue to walk on the foot, increasing the number and severity of injuries.

Signs and Symptoms

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

- Increase in skin temperature at the site of the injury
- Swelling- moderate to severe
- Redness in the affected area
- Dry skin over the area due to lack of sweat- this is caused by the destruction of the sweat glands
- Structural damage- foot becomes shorter or wider

Most people will 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

PATIENT GUIDE TO CHARCOT DEFORMITY

Prevention of Charcot Joints

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

What Can I Do?

- 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 of your condition is determined, you must rest your feet. This means no walking to prevent further injury. You may require custom shoes, casts, crutches, a wheelchair, or bed rest to heal. Sometimes injuries are severe enough that surgery is required to remove bony prominences to prevent ulcer formation.

When Should I Have Someone Look at My Foot?

If you have experienced any of the signs or symptoms of a Charcot joint, you may benefit from the advice of a professional trained in the treatment of this disease process. Symptoms to look for are:

- Increase in skin temperature at the site of the injury
- Swelling– moderate to severe
- Redness in the affected area
- Dry skin over the area due to lack of sweat– this is caused by the destruction of the sweat glands
- Structural damage– foot becomes shorter or wider

If you have experienced any of the above, please contact your healthcare provider or one of ProCare's wound care clinics.