

## Clubfoot Information for Parents

You probably have many questions. If your questions are not answered here, please do not hesitate to ask our medical staff. We are here to help you manage your baby's problems.

### What is a Clubfoot?



Clubfoot is a common deformity of the bones and joints in the foot that is seen in newborns. It occurs in about 1 in 1,000 babies. We don't know the cause of clubfoot, but be assured that there is nothing you did to cause it, and there is no reason to feel guilty. What is important for you to know is that after treatment, your baby will have a normal looking foot with essentially normal function. This deformity usually results in no physical disability, and you can expect your child to lead a normal active life.

### What is the Treatment for Clubfoot?

#### *Step 1*

#### *Obtaining Correction: Manipulation and Casts*



We utilize the Ponseti method of clubfoot correction. Dr. Ignacio Ponseti, a professor emeritus at the University of Iowa, developed the minimally invasive method of clubfoot treatment that has been successfully used worldwide. The foot is manipulated to stretch the tight ligaments and tendons. A cast is then applied that extends from the toes to the groin to hold the correction. The cast is changed on a weekly basis for four to six weeks. At the end of this period, a small surgical procedure, called a

tenotomy is often performed to lengthen the heelcord and a cast is applied for an additional three weeks. A special brace is then ordered for the child.

#### *Step 2*

#### *Maintaining Correction: The Foot Abduction Brace*



Clubfoot deformity tends to relapse after it is corrected. To prevent relapse, after the last cast is removed, a foot abduction brace must be worn. The brace consists of shoes that are attached to an adjustable bar. Your doctor and orthotist will adjust the brace to assure a good fit. It is necessary to wear the brace 23 out of 24 hours a day for at least three months. After that, the brace is worn at night and during naps for two to three years. Expect your baby to fuss in the brace for the first couple of

nights. This is not because the brace is painful, but because it is something different. It is very important that the brace not be removed. Playing with your child when in the brace will usually help relieve the fussiness. Establishing a routine when applying the brace has also been shown to be helpful in allowing your child to adjust to the brace. Your physician or orthotist will be happy to answer any specific questions about how to apply the brace and adjust it as needed.

## Follow-Up Care

After the clubfoot has been corrected, we will ask you to return to the clinic every 3 to 4 months for the first 2 years, and then less frequently. Your doctor will decide when the brace can be safely discontinued. To prevent relapses, *do not discontinue the bracing on your own.*

## Relapses

If the deformity recurs during the first 2 to 3 years, a few remanipulations and cast applications may be needed. Occasionally, the heelcord may need to be lengthened again. In some cases, a minor operation, called an anterior tibial tendon transfer, may be needed to maintain correction.

## What to Expect in the Future

The child with a clubfoot corrected using the Ponseti technique as described in this page, can be expected to have a nearly normal functioning foot. You may notice some minor differences. The treated foot will be slightly smaller than the normal side. This is rarely more than one shoe size. Also, the calf muscle on the treated side will be smaller than the normal side. The amount of difference depends on the severity of the clubfoot deformity. Although the child may notice these differences, especially when approaching the self-conscious adolescent years, they are usually forgotten in subsequent years. Children and adults with corrected clubfoot participate, and can even excel, in sports.

## Additional Information

For more information regarding the Orthopaedic Hospital Clubfoot Clinic, please call the Physician Referral Service at (213) 742-6509, or email at: [info@orthohospital.org](mailto:info@orthohospital.org)

Orthopaedic Hospital Clubfoot Clinic  
Lewis E. Zions, M.D., Director  
Orthopaedic Hospital Outpatient Medical Center  
2400 South Flower St., Los Angeles, CA 90007  
(213) 742-1000