

What is Charcot Foot?

There is something that can happen to people that are active, do not experience foot pain due to neuropathy, and has foot arthritis that you need to be aware of. The arthritis in a neuropathic foot basically gets so bad that the bones and joints of the foot break down. The medical term is called **Charcot neuroarthropathy** (pronounced shark-

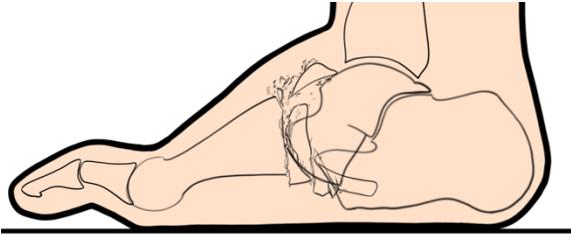


Fig 1. Arch collapse (Charcot foot)

oh). This condition can happen to any joint of the body, but the most common area is the arch of the foot.

People suffering from this foot condition often only notice foot swelling that do not go away for days. Because they have neuropathy, they don't feel pain. So they could not imagine the possibility that multiple foot bones are actually broken. If left untreated, the arch can completely collapse. This happens slowly over time. A collapsed arch puts an extraordinary amount of pressure on an area

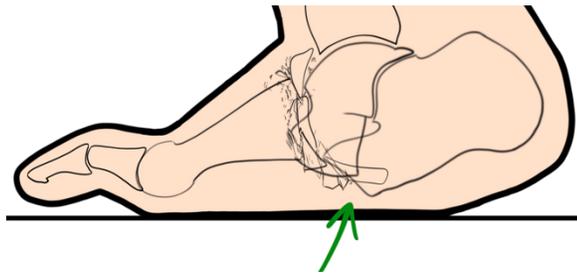


Fig 2. New pressure spot on a part of the foot that isn't designed to bear weight.

of the foot that is not designed to bear weight. This can cause very large foot ulcers that are difficult to heal.

The best treatment would be to catch it early, before the arch completely collapses. We would then put the foot in a total contact cast that will be changed every few weeks. We take x-rays of the foot regularly to track the bone

healing and make sure that the arch does not continue to collapse. This healing process of the fractures could take months, even up to a year. That is because the bones are shredded so bad that there is a large space that must be filled with bone and allowed time to solidify. The prognosis is not good once the arch collapses. It could not be

stressed enough, if there is swelling especially one foot more than the other, this is not normal. See a doctor right away!

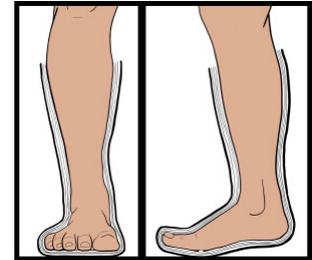


Fig 3. Total contact cast treats Charcot and diabetic foot ulcers

Summary:

- Check your feet everyday for swelling, especially if one foot is more swollen than the other. This swelling might mean fractures in your foot!
- These fractures can cause the arch to collapse and create large foot ulcers that are very difficult to treat, placing the limb at high risk for amputation.
- If the fractures are caught early, it could be treated and will have a much better prognosis.

