

Long-term outlook

The long-term outlook for children born with talipes is excellent. After treatment, almost all children have normally functioning feet. Most children go on to lead active lives with no residual weakness.

A few defects may not be completely fixed, however treatment can improve the appearance and function of the foot.

For more information please contact your local
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Talipes (Clubfoot)



What is Talipes?

Talipes equinovarus also known as clubfoot is a congenital deformity of the foot. It is called clubfoot because the foot is abnormally positioned at a sharp angle to the ankle and can look like the head of a golf club.

It affects the bones, muscles, tendons and blood vessels of the limb and can affect one or both feet. The foot and calf are usually short and under-developed. The heel is pulled upwards by a short Achilles tendon (connects the calf muscle to the heel) while the forefoot (front half of the foot) turns inward. Despite its appearance, the affected foot and leg contain all the same bones, muscles, tendons, and anatomic parts as the unaffected limb. Talipes occurs in approximately one in every 1,000 live births in the Pakeha population and 6-7 in every 1000 live births in the Maori/Pacific population. It occurs twice as often in males as females. Thirty to sixty percent of cases affect both feet. Talipes can also be inherited through families.



Diagnosis

Up to 80% of talipes are diagnosed ante-natally. However, a diagnosis based on ultrasound alone produces a false positive rate of up to 10% (this means it is diagnosed as abnormal when the foot is actually normal). This is typically due to whether and how much or little your baby moves his/her feet during the scan.

Some cases are diagnosed only after the baby is born.

Why does it occur?

Most cases have no underlying cause. Sometimes this condition is seen in several members of the same family.

A small proportion of cases are associated with an additional structural defect or chromosomal abnormality.

Will my baby have other problems?

Occasionally some babies with talipes do have other problems. Once talipes has been identified in your baby you will be referred to your local Fetal Medicine Unit for a more detailed scan to look for any other abnormalities. Other abnormalities are more common when both feet have talipes.

In some cases, the obstetrician may offer an amniocentesis to test for a chromosomal abnormality. This test carries a small risk of miscarriage (approximately 0.1%). An amniocentesis allows us to detect chromosomal abnormalities from a sample of the fluid from around your baby. It is obtained by inserting a thin needle through your abdomen and into your uterus.

If no other abnormality is found on your scan, the talipes is classified as 'isolated' and the outlook for these cases is good.

Will the Clubfoot cause problems in pregnancy?

If your baby has no other abnormalities and there is a normal amount of fluid around him/her it is unlikely that there will be problems with your pregnancy. There is no known prenatal treatment.

What happens when my baby is born?

Talipes is a treatable condition. You will meet with the Paediatricians at your local hospital who will assess your baby and make a plan for the care required.

Following treatment your child will commence normal activity and by the time he/she is standing/walking he/she will be functioning at the same level as his/her peers.

Sometimes a physiotherapist will start by manipulating the foot to try and move it into the correct position. This may not always work. Sometimes the affected foot is placed in a plaster cast which is changed at regular intervals and some infants may also require surgery to release the short tendons.

Treatment is intensive and can be required in some form until your child is two years old.

Your child will remain under the care of your local Paediatric Orthopaedic Service until he/she has stopped growing to monitor for and treat any problems that may arise.

Starship Hospital in Auckland has an information sheet that you can view; however, the treatment in your area may differ slightly.

<http://www.healthpoint.co.nz/public/paediatrics/starship-paediatric-orthopaedics/club-foot-talipes/>