

CHARCOT FOOT/ANKLE RECONSTRUCTION SURGERY



SURGERY INFORMATION



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THE SURGERY

- Charcot neuroarthropathy causes catastrophic destruction and dislocation of bones and joints
- Surgery for charcot neuroarthropathy must be performed with strict diabetic control and good nutrition**
- The surgery often involves reconstruction of the bones and joints into the correct alignment, which can involve gradual correction with a circular frame (**see Circular Frame**)
- The surgery is sometimes **staged**, with the first stage being correction of the deformity using a circular frame which can take 6-12 weeks
- The second stage is **fusing the bones in the correct position, using bone graft** from the bone above the hip, or the fibula, and held still using rods, plates and screws internally, or a circular frame
- Xrays are used in theatre to make sure the bones are aligned correctly, and there is a tourniquet placed around the thigh to help with bleeding
- This is major surgery, and can take several hours.
- The surgery aims to create a good foot shape to prevent ulceration and aid mobilisation, but will not return the foot to normal**

THE HOSPITAL STAY

- If the surgery is done in 2 stages, please see **Circular Frame** information for the first stage
- After the second stage, the frame may stay on, or you wake up with a **half plaster (backslab) or a boot** and specialised vacuum dressings with a machine
- Your foot will be **elevated** overnight, and you have **antibiotics through a drip**
- You will **blood thinning medications** or injections to prevent DVT
- You will stay in hospital for **2-5 days** with antibiotics, blood thinners, regular paracetamol, regular laxatives, regular vitamin C and stronger pain killers to take if and when required
- Often a **medical physician** is involved in your care, especially if the charcot is caused by diabetes
- You will not be allowed to weight bear for 8-12 weeks
- Depending on your balance and strength, you may need **rehabilitation** post operatively
- Buying a second hand **knee scooter** pre operatively and practicing at home before the surgery can be helpful; please bring it into the hospital with you. It is easier to use a knee scooter than crutches

WHEN YOU GO HOME

- You will need **medications for pain relief**; regular paracetamol (2 tablets four times a day) is recommended, as well as strong pain killers. These can have side effects of drowsiness, nausea and constipation, and other tablets to help with these side effects may be required.
- You will need **blood thinning medications** or injections and **vitamin C** for 8-12 weeks
- You will need a **shower chair** and bags to keep the plaster dry
- A nurse will change your vacuum dressing after 5-7 days and this will stay on until the wound is healed and dry
- You will need to make an appointment with the orthotics company on the same day or the day after your wound appointment to have a bivalved total contact cast made

CHARCOT FOOT AND ANKLE RECONSTRUCTION



REHABILITATION

All patients are different. These timelines are only a guide, and some patients may progress faster or slower than others.

0-3 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will be in a backslab or boot for 2-3 weeks You will not be allowed to weight bear on the affected side. Please keep your foot elevated and out of bed for toilet only You will need to bag the leg for showers Please take blood thinning medications/injections, pain killers, antibiotics and vitamin C as prescribed A nurse will change your vacuum dressing once a week until the wound is healed and dry
2-3 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post op appointment and removal of the vacuum dressing and sutures if wounds are ready Please organise an appointment with the orthotist to have a bivalved total contact cast placed after the appointment Elevate the foot at rest Commence seated showering with a shower and pat the wounds dry; please check you foot at this time to ensure this is no redness, pressure areas or signs of infection You must then wear the cast at all times except for showering (including sleeping)
8-12 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An xray will be taken The cast will be removed and you can start weightbearing in a boot for a further 6 weeks with physiotherapy You can take the boot off for sleeping and showering and please call Dr Graff if you notice any redness or pressure areas or moisture from the wounds You or someone must check your foot daily to ensure there are no pressure areas

4-6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will still have ongoing swelling and may not fit into normal shoes. If you can fit into them, wear supportive sneakers with rocker bottom shoes, or supportive custom boots with rocker bottom soles Please consult your podiatrist for ongoing shoe wear and/or orthotics
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WHEN CAN I DRIVE?

- Left foot 2-3 months
- Right foot 4 months

WHEN CAN I RETURN TO WORK?

- Seated work at 3 months
- Prolonged standing 6-8 months
- Heavy labour work 12-18 months

WHAT CAN GO WRONG?

Surgery for charcot foot is high risk for complications, including amputation. It is imperative to have strict diabetic control, good nutrition, and daily wound checks

Potential complications include:

- Anaesthetic problems
- Wound/scar problems
- Nerve/vessel/ tendon injury
- Blood clots
- Infection
- The fusion does not heal (non union)
- The fusion heals in the wrong position (malunion)
- Ongoing pain/swelling
- The need for further surgery
- Amputation
- Charcot neuroarthropathy of other joints
- Arthritis of other joints

CONTACT

If you want more information, or have any questions or problems, please contact Dr Graff on admin@christygraft.com or please call the rooms on **0493 461 133**