

Paediatric Orthopaedics

Talipes (clubfoot) and the Ponseti Technique - frequently asked questions -

This leaflet describes what happens to your child in the first stages of treatment for talipes. Another leaflet, called 'The boots and bar stage of the Ponseti technique' – frequently asked questions - describes in more detail the last stages of treatment. This will be given to you later on in your child's treatment or can be obtained from the Addenbrooke's website.

What is talipes (clubfoot)?

Talipes (clubfoot) is a condition present from birth that causes one or both feet to be twisted out of the normal position. The affected foot is smaller and the leg thinner than normal, which might not be obvious if both feet are affected.

What is the Ponseti technique?

The treatment offered to the parents of children who have talipes is the Ponseti technique. This aims to correct the child's foot so that the foot is functional, looks as normal as possible and is pain free. There are several stages of treatment.

1. The first stage involves a series of manipulations and casting.
2. Many children will need to have a tenotomy operation (see overleaf), followed by a stage of wearing a cast.
3. The final stage will involve your child wearing boots and a bar until they are about five years old.

What does the first stage involve?

The first stage of the Ponseti technique involves a series of manipulations, during which the bones are gently rotated and the soft tissues stretched. Babies do not find this painful.

During these manipulations, the foot is held in place with a plaster cast, which is applied from the toes to the groin. This cast is left on for approximately seven days. This allows enough time for the muscles and ligaments to relax and for the bones to grow into the corrected position.

What happens next?

Your child will need to attend the Casting Clinic weekly, so that the plaster casts can be replaced in the next position.

How many times does the plaster have to be reapplied?

The plaster will be applied between six and eight times. Each cast holds the foot in a new position.

When can I attend the clinic to have the plaster replaced?

The Casting Clinic is held every Monday from 0900 to 1100 hrs. At each appointment, a new appointment for the following week can be made.

How can parents help during treatment and plaster sessions?

It is very helpful if you can encourage your baby to relax during any treatment or plaster sessions. Please bring normal feeds for your child, which can be given during the process of manipulation and plastering.

Will surgery also be needed?

The majority of babies born with talipes have a tight achilles tendon (heel cord). To achieve a good result, this tendon requires lengthening with a small operation called a tenotomy. This is usually planned at around week six of the casting. Any children that do not require surgery will instead begin the boots and bar stage of treatment (see below and 'The boots and bar stage of the Ponseti technique' – frequently asked questions).

What does the tenotomy operation involve?

The operation will be performed under a general anaesthetic and involves a small cut in the heel. Children stay in hospital overnight in preparation for surgery the next day, and can usually go home on the day of the surgery. During the operation, a plaster cast is applied to maintain the position of the foot - this cast will remain on for three weeks.

What are boots and bar and why will my baby need to wear them?

When the cast is removed after three weeks, both feet are put into boots that are attached to a metal bar. The boots help position the feet and the length of the bar maintains the correction.

How long must the boots and bar be worn?

Immediately after fitting, these boots and bar **must** be worn for three months, both day and night. After three months, your child will need to wear the boots and bar during the night only. During the day, your child can walk bare foot or wear well-fitting shoes. The boots will need to be worn at night until your child is about five years old.

How will we be supported during this time?

Throughout the treatment, you and your child will be seen regularly in clinic, giving you the chance to see how your baby's feet are correcting.

How to care for your child's plaster cast

When the plaster cast is first applied, it will take several hours for the plaster to dry fully. During this time, please take extra care not to disturb the plaster in any way.

It is important to follow all of the instructions below carefully, to ensure your baby is happy and safe, and the treatment is successful. Any of the staff involved in your baby's care are happy to answer any queries you have.

Please:

- Check your baby's toes are pink and warm at every nappy change
- Check your baby's skin around the edges of the plaster for any signs of the plaster rubbing, for example redness or soreness
- Keep the plaster dry – your child is not allowed baths during this time
- Change your baby's nappy frequently to avoid soiling the plaster.

It is important to contact the hospital if:

- You cannot see your baby's toes
- Your baby's toes are not pink and warm
- The plaster becomes loose, cracked and/or crumbly
- Your baby is crying more than usual and appears to be in pain.

Useful contact numbers:

- The Physiotherapist can be contacted (or bleeped 152 998) via Tel: 01223 245 151
- The Plaster Room Tel: 01223 217 772
- The Consultant Surgeon's (Mr Rehm) secretary Tel: 01223 216 101 (or ext 2101).

If you have any problems outside normal working hours, please take your child to your local Emergency Department and contact one of the Addenbrooke's team as soon as possible.

National support group

STEPS - The National Association for Children with Lower Limb Abnormalities,
Lymm Court, 11 Eagle Brow, Lymm, Cheshire, WA13 0LP; Website: www.steps-charity.org.uk

This document is also available in other languages, large print and audio format upon request – 01223 216032.

本文件也可應要求，製作成其他語文或特大字體版本，也可製作成錄音帶。

Cantonese

આ દસ્તાવેજ વિનંતી કરવાથી બીજી ભાષાઓ, મોટા છાપેલા અક્ષરો અથવા ઓડિઓ રચનામાં પણ મળી રહેશે.

Gujarati

A richiesta questo documento è anche disponibile in altre lingue, a caratteri grandi e in formato audio.

Italian

ئەم بەلگەییە ھەرۆھە بە زمانەکانی کە، بە چاپی درشت و بە شریتی تەسجیل دەس دەکەوێت

Kurdish

درخواست پر یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں میں، بڑے حروف کی چھپائی اور سننے والے ذرائع پر بھی میسر ہے۔

Urdu

Document History

Authors	Amended by Mr Rehm, Ms Woodbine, Mrs Purchase
Department	Paediatric Orthopaedics Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 2QQ www.addenbrookes.org.uk
Contact number	01223 216 101
Published	May 2005
Review date	May 2007
File name	PI190_Talipes and the Ponseti Technique_a4.doc (Word)
Version number	02
Ref	PI 190