

Fact Sheet

Division of Child and Adolescent Health
Pediatric Screening and Genetic Services
Virginia Genetics Program
1-800-523-4019
www.vahealth.org/genetics



Clubfoot

What is clubfoot?

Clubfoot is a condition that is present at the time of a child's birth. It is due to incorrect growth of the bones, joints, muscles, and blood vessels of the foot. The problems leading to clubfoot usually begin between weeks 10 and 12 of pregnancy. The foot is stiff, usually twisted inward, and cannot be brought to the normal position. This condition can affect one or both feet.

What types of problems occur with clubfoot?

The child cannot carry his/her weight on the bottom of the foot but usually carries it on the side of the foot. Walking on the side of the foot can hurt the skin and lead to infection. The calf muscle may be underdeveloped or shorter than normal. Without treatment the bones will become misshapen. Pain may occur when the individual walks, even after treatment.

How common is clubfoot?

Clubfoot occurs in about 4500 births in the United States each year. In Virginia, approximately 160 children are born yearly with clubfoot. Approximately 1 out of 2 times that the birth defect occurs, both feet are clubbed.

What causes clubfoot?

The cause of most cases of clubfoot is unknown. It is thought that cases may be due to a combination of environmental factors and genetic factors. Environmental factors may include infection and disease or a cramped position in the womb.

Clubfoot can occur with other birth defects or it may be the only birth defect a child has. Parents of a child with clubfoot have a higher chance of having another child with clubfoot. This chance is 2-5 in 100. A genetic counselor or medical geneticist can help you to determine the risks for your family and situation.

How is clubfoot treated?

Treatment begins soon after birth. The foot is put in a cast to correct the position of the foot. The cast is changed and the position of the foot is adjusted regularly. In about 1 of 2 cases, casting corrects the problem, and a final brace is used to hold the foot in the proper position. For the remaining cases, surgery is considered. Surgery is usually done when the child is between 3 months and 1 year of age. In some cases the clubfoot returns after surgery, and further surgery may be necessary.

Where can I go for more information about clubfoot?

March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation
www.modimes.org
1-888-MODIMES (1-888-663-4637)

National Center for Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities
Centers for Disease Control
www.cdc.gov/ncbddd
1-770-488-7160

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