

## TREATMENT

During the early stages, the foot and ankle must be protected so that the bones can repair themselves.

Your podiatrist may apply a cast or fit a removable boot. You may be required to use crutches or a knee scooter.

Modification of your daily activity will be required to avoid further trauma to your foot. This may include reducing or limiting daily weight-bearing activities at work and home. It may mean that you are unable to work or drive for a period of time.

In the later stages a CROW (Charcot Restraint Orthotics Walker), a CAM walker, custom shoes and orthotics can be fitted to prevent reoccurrence of Charcot foot and reduce pressure on deformities.

In some cases, surgery may be required, particularly if there is severe deformity or the foot is unstable.

## PREVENTATIVE CARE

Healing a Charcot Foot may take many months. With some patients it can take considerably longer (**12-18 months**).

Treatment of a Charcot foot can be a long process and have a significant impact on a person's independence and emotional wellbeing.

Please keep your podiatrist informed about any concerns that you have during the treatment process. If required, your podiatrist can refer you to other services for support.

**For further information  
or to enquire about an  
appointment please contact:**

ACCESS AND INFORMATION  
Warrnambool Community Health  
Koroit Street  
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# Charcot Foot



## WHAT IS CHARCOT FOOT?

Charcot foot is a condition involving weakening of the bones in the foot. Any condition that causes loss of sensation in the feet (Peripheral neuropathy) can lead to Charcot foot. A common cause of peripheral neuropathy is diabetes.

Charcot foot results in progressive fractures of bones and destruction of soft tissue. Eventually the joints collapse and the foot may take on an abnormal shape.

Most people would immediately feel pain from a fracture and avoid walking on the foot. People with peripheral neuropathy cannot feel the pain and continue to walk on the foot. This leads to further fractures and dislocations in the foot.

Charcot foot is a vicious cycle that can lead to severe foot deformity, disability and even amputation.

## SYMPTOMS

- Swelling of the foot
- Redness of the foot
- Warm to touch (compared to the other foot)
- May have pain in the foot, however often there is minimal pain.
- Instability and deformity

## DIAGNOSIS

In its initial stages, Charcot foot can be difficult to diagnosis. Early X-rays often appear normal and so Charcot foot is commonly misdiagnosed as a soft tissue injury, infection or arthritis.

If your podiatrist suspects a Charcot foot, they will examine the foot and assess the temperatures of both feet.

If X-rays appear normal and Charcot foot is still suspected, further imaging and blood tests are essential to rule out other conditions and confirm the diagnosis of Charcot foot.

## STAGES OF CHARCOT FOOT

Early diagnosis and treatment of Charcot foot is essential to minimise the amount of damage and deformity that can occur in the affected foot.

Outlined below are the typical stages that a Charcot foot will go through from start to finish during the treatment period.

**Stage 1 (acute):** Redness, swelling and warmth. X-rays may show soft tissue swelling. However, fractures may not be evident for several weeks.

**Stage 2 (Coalescence):** Redness, swelling, and warmth are reducing. X-rays show early bone healing.

**Stage 3 (Consolidation):** Redness, swelling and warmth continue to resolve. Bony healing with no further deformity/fractures.

