Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

Information for Patients

Positional Talipes

Physiotherapy Service

What is positional talipes?

Positional talipes is a common foot condition in new-born babies that may affect one or both feet.

There are two types of foot positions in positional talipes, but in most cases the foot rests down and inwards, and the foot can be positioned into a neutral (not curved) position by hand.

What causes positional talipes?

Positional talipes is caused by limited space in the womb for the baby to move their foot around. It is not caused by problems with the bones in their foot, and the affected foot is usually flexible so that an adult can move their foot into a neutral position. It should not cause any problems with their walking.

How is positional talipes diagnosed?

Positional talipes is diagnosed by examining the baby's feet straight after birth.

How is positional talipes treated?

Positional talipes will normally improve within a couple of weeks without any treatment, but some exercises can be done to speed up the foot posture in case there is some mild tightness.

The following stretches can be done every nappy change until the foot posture improves; it is easier when your baby is relaxed, so could also be done after a feed.

Stretch the foot into the opposite direction:

- Hold the ball of your baby's foot between your fingers and thumb
- Place your other hand gently around the top of the leg to keep the leg still
- Stretch the foot out and up (opposite position to how the foot rests)
- Hold for 10-20 counts, repeat 3-4 times

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Tickle the foot:

- Tickle the outside edge of your baby's foot
- This will stimulate the muscles to pull the foot up, which will make the muscles stronger

Massage:

- You can massage the foot using baby oil

Follow-up

Your baby normally doesn't need a follow-up appointment, but if you remain concerned about your baby's foot posture after 2 months then see your Health Visitor or GP and if required your baby can be referred for a physiotherapy assessment.

Other type of positional talipes (not common)

This type of positional talipes is not as common as the previous one described. It is also caused by lack of space in the womb, and can affect one or both feet, but the feet are turned up and outwards.

How is this type of positional talipes treated?

The foot can have limited movement when bringing the foot down and inwards, and will require an assessment by a physiotherapist to check the tightness. Stretches are advised, but some babies might need further input and the options can be discussed with the physiotherapist. The following stretches can be done when the baby is relaxed.

Stretch the foot into the opposite direction:

- Hold your thumb on the inside bony part of your baby's foot and place your other hand gently around the top of the leg to keep the leg still
- Stretch the foot down and in (opposite position to how the foot rests)
- Hold for 10-20 counts, repeat 3-4 times

Tickle the foot:

- Tickle the inside edge of your baby's foot and their calf
- This will stimulate the muscles to pull the foot in and down, which will make the muscles stronger

Massage:

- You can massage the foot using baby oil

How often should you do the activities?

For both types of positional talipes; all the activities can be done several times a day. For the stretches the baby will need to be relaxed, so after a bath or feed is the best time.

Paediatric Physiotherapy Service

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NHCC: 01873 732712 (Nevill Hall Children's Centre, Abergavenny)

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