

Health Education Leaflet Diabetic Foot Clinic

Total Contact Cast

This leaflet is to give you advice about your total contact cast (TCC) which has been applied because you have diabetic foot ulcer / Charcot Foot.

TCC is the recognised gold standard treatment for diabetic foot ulceration and Charcot. The cast is designed to take pressure away from your foot and distribute it up your leg.

The cast is made from layers of fibreglass bandage.

Once you have had the cast applied you will not be able to put any weight on it for an hour. After this you can walk about on the cast; however the less walking you do in the cast the better. If you need crutches to help you get about, the podiatrist will arrange this for you.

The advantages of TCC are:

- It is the best possible treatment for the type of ulcer that you have.
- It should help to heal your ulcer as quickly as possible.
- If you have Charcot, it is the best way of keeping the bones in your foot supported.

The disadvantages are:

- The cast may rub and cause other ulcerations on your foot or leg.
- You may need to be in the cast for many months and in some cases over a year.
- You may have to come to the clinic every week to have the cast reapplied.
- You may have to be off work while you have the cast on.
- You will not be able to drive a manual car while you have the cast on. In certain circumstances you can drive an automatic car but you will need to check this with your car insurance company.
- We do not recommend travelling abroad when you have a diabetic foot problem, and you should speak directly with your airline for advice if you are planning to fly. Remember to inform your travel insurance company about your foot problem before you travel.

Instructions for patients:

- Rest your leg as much as possible
- Wear the sandal provided for you at all times when you are walking
- Check your cast every day for signs of damage
- Check the skin on both legs for signs of the cast rubbing. To prevent rubbing your other leg when in bed you can use a large sock or pillow case to cover the cast.

- Keep a close check on your blood sugar levels.
- DO NOT try to remove the cast yourself.
- DO NOT put talcum powder or any other substance down the cast to make it smell nice or feel comfortable.
- DO NOT poke anything down the cast as this could damage the skin under the cast and cause infection or further pressure sores.
- DO NOT get the cast wet. You can get a plastic cover for the cast which will keep it dry while you shower.

Ring the foot clinic immediately for advice (01603 288522) if:

- You notice the cast has caused a rub or made any part of your foot bleed.
- You feel unwell, tired, hot, shivery with flu like symptoms as this might mean that you are developing an infection in the whole of your body.
- You have pain or discomfort in your foot or leg.
- Your cast becomes loose, tight, stained, wet, soft, cracked or starts to smell badly.
- There is anything about your cast that is worrying to you.

**The foot clinic is open from:
8.30am – 4.30pm
Monday – Friday
Direct dial 01603 288522**

If the cast is troubling you at the weekend, please go to Accident and Emergency and contact the Diabetic Foot Clinic on the next working day

Are there any other possible complications?

Yes - A possible **serious** complication when wearing a cast is a deep vein thrombosis (DVT) or pulmonary embolism (PE). These are blood clots in the leg (DVT) or lung (PE).

Symptoms include:

- Increased or renewed pain in the leg.
- Pain in the calf rather than over the ulcer site.
- Shortness of breath.
- A sharp pain in the chest which is worse when you breathe in.
- Coughing up blood.

If you experience any of the above, you must seek urgent medical help. Either return to the foot clinic, go to A&E or dial 999.

Useful sources of information:

Please ask your doctor or podiatrist for more information.

NHS choices website patient information on blood clots. Visit www.nhs.uk

NHS Direct – Offers health information and advice from specially trained nurses over the phone 24 hours a day. Please call 0845 4647 or visit www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Lifeblood: The Thrombosis Charity also has more information. Please visit www.thrombosis-charity.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) – To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS on 01603-289036