

# Foot Problems and Deformities in Newborn Babies

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One of the most common deformities in newborns are problems with the feet. Most of these foot deformities are treated with nonsurgical treatments, and in many cases can simply be observed. However, it's important to understand the deformity to ensure appropriate treatment is being provided.

## Clubfoot

Clubfoot actually describes an array of foot deformities that cause your newborn baby's feet to be twisted, pointing down and inward. About half of babies with clubfoot have it in both feet and approximately 1 to 4 babies in 1,000 are born with this condition. Boys have clubfeet nearly twice as often as girls.<sup>1</sup>

While clubfoot doesn't cause your baby pain, it can cause long-term problems, affecting his or her ability to walk. However, if it's properly treated with stretching exercises, casts, and/or surgery, the clubfoot deformity can often be corrected in early childhood.

## Metatarsus Adductus

Metatarsus adductus is a common congenital foot condition that's seen in about 1% to 2% of all newborns.<sup>2</sup> It's usually detected when your baby's toes and forefoot are pointed inward, making it difficult to straighten them. The appearance of your baby's sole likely resembles a bean shape.

Mild cases often resolve on their own, but more severe cases may need casts, splints, or corrective shoes. Surgery is rarely needed for metatarsus adductus.

## Congenital Vertical Talus

Congenital vertical talus is an uncommon cause of a type of flatfoot in newborns. It's often associated with other congenital or chromosomal abnormalities. The appearance of your baby's foot with congenital vertical talus is a sole that looks like the bottom of a rocking chair.

The treatment for vertical talus is similar to the treatment for clubfoot, using stretching exercises, casts, and, if necessary, surgery.

## Polydactyly

Polydactyly means your baby has an extra toe or toes and it's actually fairly common:

Around 1 in 1,000 babies are born with polydactyly. Though it can run in the family, sometimes polydactyly occurs without any family history.

The treatment of polydactyly of the foot depends on where and how the extra toe or toes are connected. If there's no bone and the toe is poorly formed, a clip can be put on it to stop blood flow, which will cause it to fall off. Better formed toes are surgically removed once your baby is about one year old, but before he or she begins to walk.<sup>4</sup>

### **Congenital Curly Toes**

Curly toes occur when one of your baby's toes is abnormally rotated. The toe will also be in a bend position, but the primary deformity is the malrotation of the toe. It usually occurs on both feet.

About 25% of cases of curly toe resolve on their own.

The treatment of a curly toe deformity is to cut the tendon on the bottom of the toe to relieve the stress causing the rotation, but usually not until your child is at least 6 years old, since it may go away by itself.<sup>5</sup>

### **Overlapping Toes**

An overlapping toe happens when your baby's fifth digit (the baby toe) crosses over the top of the fourth toe. This condition happens in varying degrees and in some babies isn't bothersome.

In other children, an overlapping toe can create difficulties with footwear and may require a surgical procedure to correct the deformity.<sup>6</sup>