

Clubfoot and the Ponseti method: Exercises for your child

This leaflet is for children diagnosed with Clubfoot who have had the Ponseti method of casting, and have now had the final cast removed. It explains the exercises that should be performed to keep the feet/foot flexible.

Stage 1: After the final cast is removed

Your child will wear the boots and bar for 23 hours of the day after the final cast is removed. We recommend that you perform the below exercises with your child during the hour that he or she spends out of the brace.

Massaging the foot:

After the cast is removed, your baby's foot might be sensitive to touch. During the hour that the child spends out of the boots and bar, you should gently massage the foot with lotion or cream. Use different strokes (e.g. tapping, tickling) and surfaces (e.g. cotton balls, wash cloths) to rub the foot. This will help desensitize the foot.



Stimulating the muscles

Because of the original clubfoot deformity, the muscles that pull your baby's foot in and down are stronger than the ones that pull it out and up. To help balance the strength of these muscles, stimulate the outside border of your baby's foot and watch it fan out and up!



Stretching into abduction and dorsiflexion (out and up)

Although stretching is not part of Dr. Ponseti's original protocol, it is gaining wider acceptance as a very useful part of the treatment process, even by Dr Ponseti himself. Stretching can help your child's foot stay flexible by maintaining the correction that was achieved after casting and tenotomy.

Stretch your baby's foot out (i.e. abduction) and up (i.e. dorsiflexion) when your child spends time out of the boots and bar. Think about how the last cast looked, and try to stretch the foot into the same position. Hold the stretch for 5 to 10 seconds and repeat five times.



Stretching into plantarflexion (down)

The muscles on the front of your child's ankle might become tight because of the amount of time that the child must spend in a cast to correct the clubfoot deformity. It is important to stretch these muscles so that your child will be able to achieve a full toe-down foot posture.



To stretch your child's ankle, place one thumb across your child's lower shin (just above the ankle joint) and the other thumb across the mid foot. Push down on your child's foot to stretch it into a toe-down posture. Hold the stretch for 5 to 10 seconds and repeat five times.

If your baby is consistently pulling a foot out of the boot or if your child develops a sore, you need to contact the hospital as

soon as possible to make an appointment. If the child does not have a sore or if the boots and bar are not making the sore any worse, please try to reapply the boots and bar until your next appointment.

If you are unable to reapply the boots and bar, you should stretch your baby's foot out and up several times a day until the child can be examined at the hospital. Hold the stretch for 5 to 10 seconds and repeat five times. Perform this stretch at every nappy change or at least five times a day. This stretch does not replace the benefits of wearing the boots and bar. It is critical that you contact the hospital if your child is consistently experiencing difficulties with the boots and bar.

Around three months after the final cast is removed, your physiotherapist or doctor will advise that your child will only need to wear their boots and bar at night-time and during naps. This will continue until they are five years old. You will need to continue to do the stretches at nappy changes.

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This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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