Compartment Syndromes of the Foot

The foot has numerous (five or more) *compartments*. The compartments are spaces that are surrounded by tough fibrous tissues. When an injury to the foot occurs, such as with a crushing type of injury, there is no room for the tissues inside those compartments to swell.

Because of this, the compartments must often be opened (*fasciotomy*) so that the tissues inside the compartment may swell and not be crushed further within the compartment.

DIAGNOSIS

This condition may be diagnosed by the caregiver using examination. Sometimes pressures are taken within the compartment, and the diagnosis is confirmed by measuring an elevated pressure.

TREATMENT

Treatment involves fasciotomy. The compartments are opened so that the tissues inside may swell following injury. If further repair within these compartments is required, it may be done at this time. The cuts (*incisions*) by the surgeon are usually left open for several days and then repaired. Sometimes skin taken from another place (*skin graft*) is necessary to close the incisions.

COMPLICATIONS

There are problems that may develop later with this type of foot injury and treatment. Damage to the small muscles within the foot may lead to:

- The toe(s) buckling upward (*claw toes*).
- The arch becoming much higher, and the foot from toes to heel becomes shorter (*cavus foot*).

These complications can be treated at a later date with the appropriate treatment. Usually rebuilding (*reconstructive*) procedures are necessary.

All of the possibilities of this type of injury will be discussed between you and your caregiver, and the best decision can be reached for treatment of your injury. Your caregiver can let you know your best options if there are options present.

Document Released: 03/26/2002 Document Re-Released: 03/14/2011
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