

# **Orthopaedic Connection**

## **Foot Drop**

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### ***Transforming patient information into patient understanding.***

Foot drop. Two simple words that most people have heard, but don't really understand. It is very descriptive of the problem, however, beyond that people don't have a clue.

### **Trouble walking**

You may find yourself tripping because you can't bring the front of your foot up by bending at the ankle. The foot may seem somewhat weak or may be very floppy. In normal walking your foot and ankle raises slightly upward as the foot swings freely under your body and lands gently on the ground.

In foot drop your foot may slap down as you take a step. It depends on whether there is partial or complete loss of function. The foot might also feel numb.

### **Why do you get it? Many reasons.**

- Compressed nerve in the back from ruptured disc
- Pressure on the peroneal nerve at the knee on the outer or lateral side
- Nerve damage from diabetes
- Injuries to the knee area - laterally
- Fractures
- After surgery on the back, knee or leg
- Even pressure from a support stocking or tight wrap around the knee can cause it

### **How do you treat it?**

It depends on the cause (if the cause can be discovered). Treatment can be as simple as rest. In addition, removing any pressure on the nerve from avoiding leg crossing to discontinuing a wrap, sock or knee brace.

How long it will last is always uncertain since injured nerves are very unpredictable.

I often prescribe a brace to help the person walk more normal while we are waiting for the nerve to recover.

If it is determined that the cause is a ruptured disc for example, I need to proceed with back surgery to treat the ruptured disc or do a spinal decompression if that is required.

Physical therapy has some role to help strengthen the muscles that are still working. Keeping the achilles tendon stretched is very important. Therapy can be started whenever a drop foot condition is diagnosed.

### **Permanent Drop Foot**

If I determine the condition is permanent, the main treatment is for an Orthotic Shop to make a plastic brace that can be worn inside the shoe to support the foot and make walking easier.

A tendon transfer might be an option. In this procedure I would transfer one end of a working tendon in the leg to the top of the foot. The transferred tendon then functions to raise the front of the foot while walking.

For more information about drop foot and all the orthopaedic conditions I treat, check out our office teaching website, [www.orthopodsurgeon.com](http://www.orthopodsurgeon.com), which can take you to Your Orthopaedic Connection for even more good information.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush