What is Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease?

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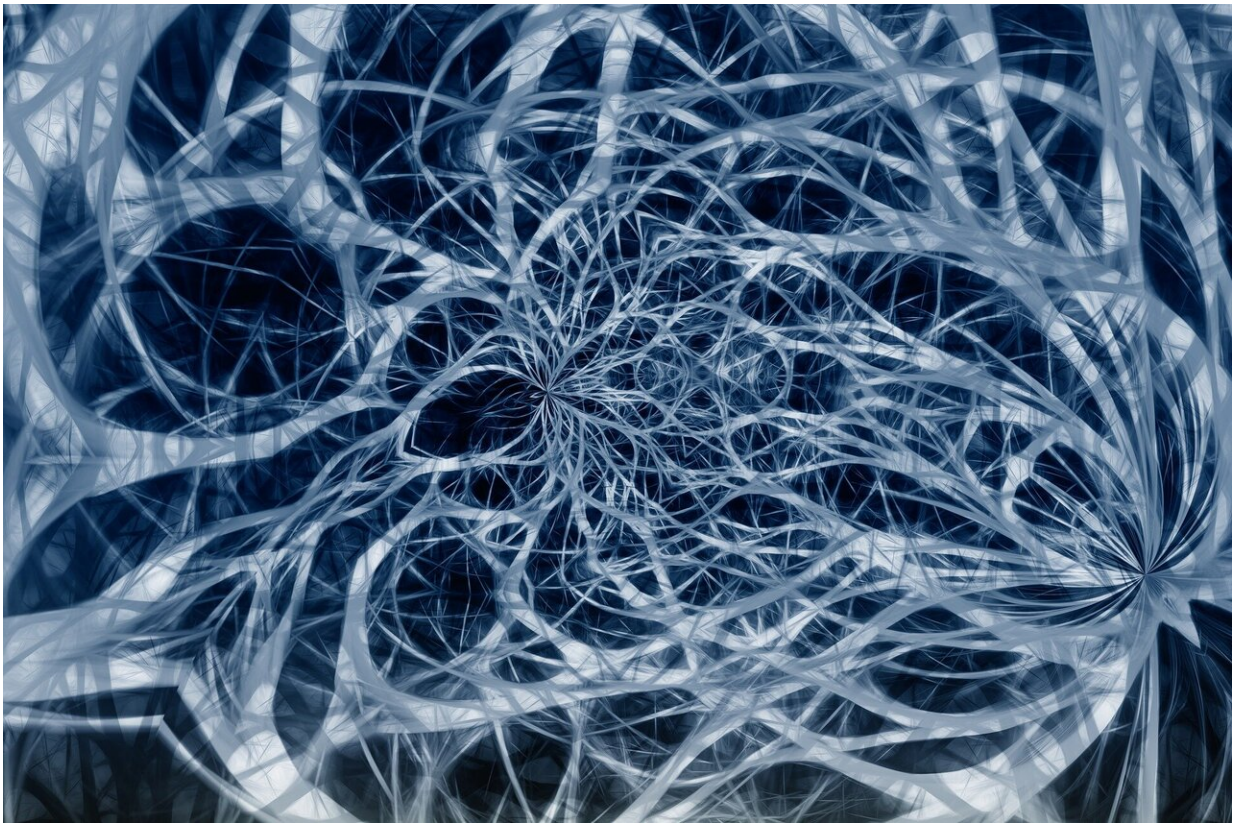

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Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, also called hereditary motor and sensory neuropathy, is a group of inherited disorders that affects an estimated 150,000 people in the U.S., according to the National Library of Medicine.

Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease causes nerve damage mostly in the peripheral nerves of the arms and legs. This nerve damage results in smaller, weaker muscles. You also may experience loss of sensation and muscle contractions, and difficulty walking. Foot deformities, such as hammertoes and high arches, also are common. Symptoms usually begin in the feet and legs, but as Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease progresses, symptoms may spread from the feet and legs to the hands and arms. The severity of symptoms can vary greatly from person to person, even among family members.

Symptoms of Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease typically appear in adolescence or early adulthood. Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease is hereditary, so you're at higher risk of developing the disorder if anyone in your immediate family has the disease.

There is no cure for Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, but treatment with medications, and physical and occupation therapy, can help manage the symptoms. If foot deformities are severe, corrective foot surgery may alleviate pain and improve your ability to walk.

If you've been diagnosed with Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease, your health care provider may recommend genetic testing. This can provide more information for family planning decisions, and it also can rule out other neuropathies.

Provided by Mayo Clinic