

Guidelines for Foot Orthoses

Introduction

When your feet hurt, you hurt all over. Each step you take requires the coordination of 26 bones and 208 muscles. When all muscles and bones are aligned in the best weight bearing position, the foot is said to achieve its “neutral position”. Should this neutral position be disturbed, problems develop and pain in the feet, ankles, knees, hips, and/or lower back results.

Although severe foot ailments may require surgery, foot care specialists are devising improved alternative methods of treatment. This field, termed “pedorthics,” uses custom molded foot orthotics and specially designed shoes. People who are treated using pedorthic devices often benefit from a correction in gait, improvements in function, reduction in pain, and the prevention in trauma to the skin.

Many people are able to wear foot orthoses in their usual footwear. Modified orthoses are available for particular sports or to wear in dress shoes. Some conditions may require orthopedic shoes, such as extra-depth or custom-made shoes to accommodate extreme foot abnormalities or therapeutic support. In the case of a severe deformity, custom molded shoes may provide an alternative alternative.

Based on your physician’s prescription, foot orthoses are being made for you by our certified orthotist to provide support and/or correct a deformity. All custom orthoses are manufactured at one of our central fabrication facilities to expedite delivery and ensure quality control, but minor modifications are done in-house for your convenience.

Wear and Care

You have just received a new pair of custom foot orthoses specifically designed to address the problems identified by you and your referring physician. These orthoses are intended to supplement the specific regimen recommended by your physician, which may include physical therapy, stretching, exercise, etc.

Although your new orthoses were designed and fabricated specifically for you, some basic procedures are still necessary to ensure the best possible results. These include proper shoe selection, expected break-in periods adjusting to the new inserts, and more. Following the recommendations below will maximize the lifespan and effectiveness of your orthoses.

The best shoes are lace up running shoes that have a removable insole. There is no specific brand that we recommend, but your orthotist can suggest brands that might benefit you. Dress shoes do not work with most foot orthotics due to decreased room in the shoes. We strongly recommend consulting your physician if you choose to wear dress shoes; you may need to have your foot orthotics modified. Your orthoses were designed to fit in the shoes provided to us at the time of fitting. Although they are transferable to similar shoes, they are by no means universal.

A break in period is often necessary for new orthoses. It is normal and fairly common to experience some discomfort for the first week or so as your foot acclimates to the new shape and support of the orthoses. To minimize this risk, we recommend you wear the inserts for two hours at a time, a few times a day, for the first few days. After this, gradually increase the length of time and frequency according to comfort. The goal is to allow your feet to acclimate to the new inserts gradually so that you are wearing them as close to full time as possible within two weeks.

If there are any issues, take detailed notes so they can be discussed and corrected during your follow-up appointment. You should expect to have an initial follow up appointment 2-4 weeks after your initial fitting. This is to monitor your progress and address any of the issues you may have found. It is also very important that you schedule a follow-up with your referring physician. This will ensure that your overall treatment plan is adjusted according to your progress and includes up-to-date recommendations from both your orthotist and physician.

To care for your orthoses, occasionally remove the inserts from your shoes and wipe them off with a damp cloth and mild soap. Dry them off completely before replacing them in your shoes. Even with periodic cleaning and the durable materials used in their construction, your orthoses will not last forever. Over time our bodies change and the materials in the orthoses may wear down, thus reducing their effectiveness. The life of a custom orthoses is different for everyone, which is why it is important to note the reoccurrence of discomfort similar to what you experienced before wearing your inserts. If this occurs, you will need to contact your referring physician to obtain a new prescription for custom foot orthoses. Once you have a new prescription, call us to schedule an appointment.

Your orthotist is:
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