



Ankle Foot Orthosis (AFO) Patient Education

Purpose: An AFO is a device that supports the ankle and foot area of the body and extends from below the knee down to and including the foot. This device is used to control instabilities in the lower limb by maintaining proper alignment and controlling motion. A plastic AFO is a custom fabricated, molded plastic device that encloses the back of the calf and bottom of the foot, and is used with patients suffering from with neurological (e.g., stroke, cerebral palsy) or orthopedic conditions (e.g., severe sprains, fractures, arthritis). It can be fabricated with or without ankle motion and is worn inside a lace-up shoe. For neurological conditions, the AFO functions by maintaining the affected joints in proper alignment to overcome weakness or muscle imbalance. For orthopedic conditions, you may benefit from AFO because it immobilizes that part of the body, permitting it to heal, and reduces pain associated with movement. You could experience temporary balance issues and fatigue. This will lessen as you spend more time in the orthosis. You may require additional physical therapy which will help you adapt to the orthosis. Some redness is expected and should dissipate in 20 minutes. Bright lasting redness, soreness or callouses will require a visit to our office.

Care and Maintenance:

Break In - Start by wearing the orthosis for one hour on the first day. Check the skin for redness or irritation. Increase wearing time by one hour per day. This will allow you to monitor your skin and allow you to get accustomed to the orthosis. The break in period usually lasts two weeks but can be longer.

Shoes and Socks - A snug seamless sock should be worn under the orthosis. A shoe with additional room in the toe box and width should be worn. A removable inlay is also preferable. Do not wear the orthosis without a shoe.

Putting the Brace on - The plastic is flexible enough to get your foot inside the brace. Once the foot and heel are properly seated in the orthosis, you can tighten the instep strap and any padding if supplied. The strap should be secure and tight. Lastly, the calf strap can be tightened. Once all straps are snug, slip your foot into the shoe and secure the shoe in the usual manner.

Areas of Concern, Risks and Precautions:

- Callousing or blistering of the skin within the orthosis
- Redness that does not go away within 20 minutes
- Damage to the orthosis of any kind
- Faulty ankle joints or mechanisms
- A skin rash anywhere the orthosis is in contact with the skin

Cleaning the brace: The orthosis can be cleaned using mild soap and water or alcohol wipes. Towel dry after cleaning. Do not submerge in water as the straps will become damaged.

Follow Up:

Our office will set up a follow up schedule to ensure proper fit and function. Any straps and pads may need to be replaced under normal wear and tear. These items can be replaced during routine follow up visits. If you experience a malfunction of your device, discomfort of any kind, abrasions or excessive pressure, please call our office. Should you experience any other changes to your physical condition not related to the orthosis, contact your physician immediately.

**Please call our office with any questions or concerns:
707.425.5028 - North Bay 707.724.8985 - Vacaville**