

AFO (Ankle Foot Orthosis) - Conventional

General Description:

An AFO is a brace that supports the ankle and foot area of the body. Support in this area is needed due to muscle weakness or nerve damage. Examples of patients with muscle weakness or nerve damage would be those who have had a stroke, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, etc.

Patients who have pain in the foot and ankle area due to trauma or other reason may benefit from an AFO because the AFO immobilizes that part of the body permitting it to heal. A conventional AFO is usually a double, upright, metal device, with a leather-covered band at the calf (See Figures 1, 2, and 3). The ankle joints may be adjustable to control ankle motion or assist with toe pickup. The joints attach to a metal stirrup that is fastened directly to the shoe, but may be attached to a removable plastic or metal footplate that slides into a shoe. A conventional AFO is often used where swelling of the leg and foot is present or there is a risk of sores on the foot.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

Application:

1. Put a sock onto the foot needing an AFO.
2. While sitting with knee flexed, open the shoelaces to the fullest extent and slide foot into the shoe as far as possible.
3. Use a shoehorn to slide the heel into the shoe to prevent breakdown of the back of the shoe.
4. Secure the laces or Velcro straps of the shoe and calf band.

Wearing Schedule:

On the first day you receive the brace, begin by wearing for only 1 hour. After 1 hour, remove the brace and check your skin for red marks. Some small, light red marks may be noticed on the skin that should go away in 20 to 30 minutes after removing the brace. Slight redness is common over the instep and under the ball of the foot. If the red marks do not go away in 20 to 30 minutes or if you notice any scratching, bruising, or blistering, **do not put the brace back on**. Call immediately to schedule an appointment with your orthotist.

If the skin is ok, wait at least 1 hour and then put the brace back on for 1 hour at a time for the rest of the first day, checking the skin after each hour.

On the second day, put the brace on for 2 hours. After 2 hours, remove the brace and check the skin. If the skin is ok, put the brace back on for 2 hours at a time for the rest of the day, checking the skin after every 2 hours. If your skin is ok, gradually increase wearing time by 1 hour each day, checking the skin after each wearing time.

Cleaning and Maintenance:

- Use paste polish on the shoe to protect the leather and keep it soft.
- If the Velcro is not sticking well on the brace, check for lint build-up on the Velcro. Remove lint by first lifting particles with the point of a toothpick. This will raise matted particles from the surface where it can easily be picked up by hand.
- On a spring-assist ankle joint, periodically oil or grease all moving parts to reduce wear. Caution - oil may run onto clothing causing black stains. Be sure to wipe off the device after oiling and check it frequently to avoid damage to clothing.

Tips and Problem Solving:

The AFO should be applied in the morning.

If you notice red marks, bruises, or blisters on your skin, discontinue wearing the brace and call your orthotist to schedule an appointment.

If there are any problems, please consult the orthotist.

