

Orthotics

Ankle Foot Orthosis

Introduction

The term AFO stands for Ankle Foot Orthosis and describes the part of the body that the brace surrounds. An Ankle Foot Orthosis (AFO) controls the range of motion in your foot and ankle and helps to stabilise its position. Good foot and ankle alignment is vital for balancing and distributing weight when you are standing and walking.

The AFO will be designed to meet the specific needs of your child. As your child adjusts to this new and proper alignment, he/she may experience some discomfort. The adjustment period usually ranges from 1-6 weeks when the recommended wearing guidelines are followed.

Wearing

The AFO has been prescribed for your child and is intended for their use only.

The AFO is designed to conform to the shape of your child's foot and ankle. Initially the AFO may feel slightly 'strange' due to the realignment of the lower limb and pressure redistribution. It will therefore require a gentle breaking-in period.

Wear time

When your child is first fitted with their AFO, they should wear into it gradually. This allows you to get used to wearing the AFO and allows the skin to gradually build up resistance to the pressures which the brace is applying. You should check your child's skin regularly during the first few



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weeks. He/she may experience some general muscle aches until they are used to wearing the AFO.

- Start slowly, only wearing the AFO for a maximum of 1 hour on the first day, with low to moderate activities.
- Increase the wearing time each day, by 30 minutes to 1 hour, until your child is comfortable wearing the AFO all day.
- Your child should increase their activity level during this transition period.
- If your child experiences any pain or discomfort, remove the AFO for at least 2-4 hours, and then try again. If pain persists, stop wearing the AFO and contact the department. The greatest long-term benefits are achieved when your child consistently wears the AFO every day.

There may be cases where your Orthotist recommends a different wearing routine, such as only at night or for sessions with your Physiotherapist. These instructions will be written in the additional information section at the end of the leaflet.

Shoes

The AFO Must be worn with a shoe at all times

- Select good shoes with proper support and always try them on with the AFO in place to ensure proper fit and comfort.
- The best type of shoes to wear with your AFO feature: a closed back and toe; comes up over the top of the foot like laced-up sport shoes; low heels; a removable liner; and a slightly wider width to accommodate the AFO.
- Be sure to wear long cotton socks (which are a little higher than the top of the AFO) to minimize the possibility of skin irritation.
- During use, ensure that footwear is secured as tightly as is comfortable.

Skin care

Your child's skin should be inspected regularly, especially in the first few weeks after they have been fitted with a new AFO. A close fitting orthosis can sometimes cause some redness on the skin around the edges of the orthosis and where the AFO is applying corrective pressures. Check skin thoroughly, especially over bony areas and around the edges of the AFO.

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If you see a red area that does not go away within 30 minutes of removing the AFO, or notice a break in the skin or blisters, you should stop wearing the AFO and make an appointment with your Orthotist to have it adjusted. You can do this by contacting the Surgical Appliances department directly on the number at the end of this leaflet.

Caring for the AFO

Cleaning

Use an antibacterial soap and warm water to wipe the inside surfaces of your AFO. Towel dry the AFO completely before putting it back on. Avoid drying in direct sources of heat (such as on the heater or using a hair dryer) as this can deform the plastic.

Straps and Padding

The straps and padding may become worn and can be replaced. To arrange repairs please contact the Surgical Appliances department.

Plastic

Inspect the plastic regularly, checking for any cracks or areas of wear and tear. Never attempt to repair, trim or adjust the AFO yourself; if a problem arises contact the Surgical Appliances department immediately.

Joints

Some AFOs may have joints at the ankle. These should be checked each time before the AFO is used; looking for any dents or cracks, and make sure that all rivets and screws are secure.

Review

Children may need their AFO changed as they grow or gain weight. If you feel your child's AFO is not fitting appropriately or is causing problems, again contact the Surgical Appliances department directly on the contact details at the end of this leaflet.

Never attempt to repair or adjust your brace yourself. If you are experiencing any problems or have questions regarding the brace, please contact your Orthotist.

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Further Information

If you require any more information or have any further questions, please contact the Surgical Appliances department using the information below.

Coventry

Surgical Appliances Department
University Hospital, Coventry
Clifford Bridge Road
Walsgrave
Coventry
CV2 2DX
Telephone number: 02476 966035

Opening Times

Monday – Thursday 08:30–16:30
Friday 08:00 – 16:00
Closed Bank Holidays

Rugby

Surgical Appliances Department
Hospital of St Cross, Rugby
Barby Road
Rugby
CV22 5PX
Telephone number: 01788 572831

Opening Times

Monday- Wednesday 08:30-16:30
Closed Bank Holidays

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 02476 966035 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

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