

Orthotics

Knee-Ankle-Foot Orthosis

Introduction

You may have been provided with a knee-ankle-foot orthosis (or KAFO) which has been designed to meet your individual needs.

KAFOs are provided to compensate for muscle weakness, paralysis or skeletal problems which cause lower limb instability. The KAFO aims to make standing and walking easier by:

- Controlling joint instability;
- Preventing excessive joint motion;
- Improving joint alignment;
- Reducing joint pain.

KAFOs are complex devices so their designs vary to suit each individual.

There are two main types:

1. Conventional KAFO with side steels which insert into the heel of a shoe with a leather thigh section and calf band.
2. Cosmetic KAFO with moulded thigh and calf sections which fit inside a shoe, connected by metal side bars.



Patient Information

Using a KAFO puts a large demand on your body and may cause premature wear and tear in your joints. Common side effects can be:

- Lower back pain
- Pain in the joints of the unaffected leg
- Additional pressure rubbing to skin

You should continue to be mindful of your surroundings as the risk of falls remains higher than usual when using your KAFO.

Wear time

You should gradually increase the wear time with your KAFO. This allows your skin to adjust to the supportive pressures which the KAFO applies. Begin by using your KAFO in a safe, indoor environment. Your clinician will advise you further on when and how long you should be wearing your KAFO for.

If your KAFO becomes uncomfortable and/or causes skin break down/blisters, discontinue use and seek advice from the Orthotics department. It is advisable to wear long socks with your KAFO to reduce the amount of friction on the skin.

Ensure you check the skin after each time you have used the KAFO to ensure there is no skin break down. **It is particularly important to check the skin if you have reduced sensation.**

Footwear

Your KAFO must be worn with footwear at all times

Depending on your need the KAFO may also be supplied with footwear, **however** this is not always the case. When selecting shoes to wear with your KAFO, look for the following features:

- Enclosed heel and toe
- Secure lace or Velcro fastening
- Removable insole
- Heel height recommended by your Orthotist
- Stiff sole and heel unit.

Patient Information

It is important to select supportive shoes which are comfortable to maximise the benefits of the KAFO.

Caring for your KAFO

You can clean your KAFO with a damp cloth and dry with a towel. Do not dry over sources of heat as this may deform the plastic.

Check the KAFO material regularly for any cracks or signs of wear and tear.

Each time you use your KAFO, check the joints and rivets for wear and tear.

Do not attempt repairs yourself; contact the Orthotics department to arrange for the repair of your KAFO.

Putting your KAFO on

You can put your KAFO on when sitting or lying down; your clinician will advise you of the best way to put it on.

Ensure all straps on your KAFO and footwear are fastened securely.

If your KAFO has knee joint locks, be sure to lock these before bearing weight through the KAFO. You should hear a 'click' when you straighten your leg to lock the joints but you should also check these manually.

Further Information

If you require any further information, please contact the Surgical Appliances Department.

Patient Information

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