

After-Care Guidelines for AFOs and KAFOs

You've just received your new orthosis. It will offer support and make your life more pleasant. But your orthosis also requires some care, attention, and concern on your part.

Often a new orthosis needs a slow break-in regimen. It may take as long as a month before the device can be worn fulltime, so don't become discouraged.

The following tips will make wearing an orthosis a positive, rewarding experience.

General wear

An ankle/foot orthosis (AFO) or knee/ankle/foot orthosis (KAFO) must always be worn with a shoe since it is extremely slippery, unstable, and ineffective without one. Always wear a sock, stocking or similar garment under the orthosis to reduce friction and protect your skin from perspiration. Using talcum powder and changing the sock promptly after perspiration buildup will also keep you more comfortable. Natural fiber socks such as cotton allow better air circulation and absorption of perspiration. Patients with metal or plastic ankle/foot orthoses should check regularly for signs of skin pressure and irregular shoe wear, reporting either to your orthotist.

Self-examination

An orthosis that fits properly should not cause any sharp, stabbing pain or create bruises, calluses, or blisters. Should this occur, call us immediately to arrange an appointment for adjustment. Occasionally, extended periods of standing or hot, humid weather will result in some swelling. Remove the orthosis and elevate your leg until the swelling subsides. If it persists or becomes painful, notify your orthotist at once.

It is also important to maintain a relatively consistent weight. Your orthosis was custom-designed for your weight and dimensions and any extreme gain or loss may cause improper fit.

Daily examination of skin in contact with the orthosis should become a habit.

Proper hygiene

Skin covered by the orthosis should be washed daily with warm water and mild soap. The skin should be completely dry before wearing the orthosis.

AFOs should be cleaned regularly with alcohol or mild soap and water. Do not soak the orthosis in water or attempt to hasten drying by using a hair dryer or placing the appliance in front of a heater.

Maintenance of a metal orthosis includes keeping the leather clean, replacing leather or Velcro as necessary, and oiling hinges.

Scheduled Visits

You should schedule a follow-up visit now that you have received your orthosis.

###