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Patient Guide for using and an Ankle Foot Orthosis (AFO)



Reason for wearing the Ankle Foot Orthosis (AFO)

The Ankle Foot Orthosis (AFO) is a brace that has been designed to provide support, correct or compensate for a deformity or weakness in the foot, ankle or knee. The AFO has been specifically prescribed for you, so you should follow the instructions given to you when it was fitted. It will only work effectively if you follow these instructions carefully.

Fitting the AFO

The AFO consists of the plastic splint, padding and straps. Always wear the AFO over a thin pair of plain socks, preferably cotton. If you are putting the AFO on a child sit them in front of you so they are supported and relaxed.

Put the heel into the back of the AFO, it is usually easier to bend the knee to 90 degrees to allow this to happen, hold the heel in place with you thumb or finger then fasten the strap over the ankle so it firmly holds the ankle in place, with the pad in the centre. Then fasten the strap around the calf securely, followed by the toe strap and any other straps. Allow the foot to drop to the floor and then check the AFO is still located in the correct place and the heel is pushed to the back of the splint. It will take practice to put on the AFO correctly, without the heel moving out of place. The AFO will not be comfortable or effective if it is not put on properly or the straps are too loose.

Please turn over:

Wearing the AFO

To start with only use the AFO for short periods of time, starting with half an hour on the first day then 1 hour on the second day and building up the wear time slowly over first few weeks. The AFO should only be worn with shoes over the top of it unless instructed otherwise.

Footwear

The shoes should be wide and deep with a fastening either lace or Velcro which opens down low on the foot. Trainers are ideal as they are wider and deeper than normal shoes. You may need to remove the original insole from the shoe to give extra room for the AFO. When buying shoes place the AFO inside the shoe to check the fit, do not buy a shoe that is too long for the AFO to gain the extra width, it is better to try a different style.

Removing the AFO

Always check skin for red marks especially when the AFO is new. As the brace is close fitting it will leave red marks initially, however they should disappear within 20 minutes of removing the AFO. If the marks do not disappear, there are blisters or pain then check the AFO is fitted correctly, if it is and there is still a problem then stop using the AFO and contact your Orthotist so it can be adapted.

Care of the Brace

The brace should be kept clean by wiping it down with a damp sponge with gentle soapy water. Let it air dry before wearing again, do not dry with a direct heat source such as a radiator. Check the brace for any signs of the padding wearing, the straps breaking or the plastic splitting, if so, contact the department for repairs or replacements.

On a child we would expect the brace to last from 4 months to a year before it is out grown. Commonly if the AFO is too small it will mark over the ankle or the toes will come over the end of the foot plate. For adults there is no outgrowth of the AFO and we would expect it to last up to 5 years.

Specific Instructions for the use of your AFO:

Further Information

If you have any concerns or problems with the AFO, please call the Orthotic department on **01305 254 408**.