

# Information About Your Ankle Foot Orthosis

## **What is an Ankle Foot Orthosis ( AFO)?**

Ankle foot orthosis or AFOs are plastic splints which are made to control your foot and ankle. They also influence your knee and hip to improve your standing and walking. AFOs are designed individually to your requirements. Your Orthotist will assess your requirements at your initial appointment.

AFOs are prescribed for a lot of different reasons:

- Control foot and ankle position
- Support weakened muscles
- Control abnormal muscle tone
- Limit abnormal movement
- To provide protection.

## **Finding footwear**

The type of footwear you wear over the AFO is important.

Below are a few things to consider when deciding on footwear:

- Always take the AFO with you when buying footwear to insure it fits.
- You may need to consider moving up one size or width of shoe to improve fitting.
- Lace ups and velcro are the best style of shoes as they give more adjustments and improves fit.
- Shoes with lower openings down the tongue are better. As it is easier to get splint in but also you can check your toes are sitting correctly within the shoe and AFO.
- If the shoe has a removable insole, please remove as this will create more depth in the shoe for the AFO and patients' foot to fit.
- Shoe pitch should be about 10mm as AFO are set at a specific angle and having higher heel can tip the knee too far forward which will affect their walking.
- How to measure heel pitch.  
Heel height – sole height = shoe pitch

**If you have issues with finding footwear please speak to your orthotist for advice.**

## **Putting Your AFO on (donning)**

**If you are putting it on by yourself follow these instructions.**

- 1 Sit down on a seat so that your hip and knee is bent (flexed) at 90 degree.
- 2 Pull your sock up high to cover area AFO touches and make sure there is no wrinkles.
- 3 Place your heel right at the back of the splint.
- 4 Tighten the ankle strap snugly making sure your heel remains at the back. This is the important strap as if it is too loose the heel will move and may cause rubbing etc.
- 5 Tighten all other straps on the AFO. They need to be secure but not as tight as the ankle strap.
- 6 Open the shoe up wide so it is easier to place the AFO/foot inside the shoe.
- 7 Shoes should be fastened to make sure they are secured around the AFO

## **What about red marks?**

- You should always check your skin every time you take your AFO off.
- It is normal to see red pressure marks on your skin for at least 30 minutes after taking the AFO off. They should disappear within this time.
- If the marks are still there and/or look deep red angry areas contact your orthotic department.
- If you notice blistering /sores on your skin you should stop wearing the AFO and contact your orthotic department as it may need adjusted.
- If the heel / foot is not in the AFO correctly this will cause red marks. Please check you are managing to get it on correctly.

**Family or carer putting on the AFO follow these instructions.**

- 1 Sit the patient on a chair in front of yourself.
- 2 Make sure hip and knee is bent (flexed) at 90 degree.
- 3 Pull sock up to cover whole area and make sure no wrinkles.
- 4 Bring foot up to correct angle of splint and rotate the foot so big foot is higher than lesser toes.
- 5 Insert heel at the back of AFO while holding foot in above position.
- 6 Hold heel in position with thumb while you tie the ankle strap securely.
- 7 You can lift up their toes and look down between the AFO and the foot, if you see a gap the heel is not secure.
- 8 Tighten the other straps.
- 9 Open shoe up wide and place in AFO/foot.

## **How long should they wear the AFO?**

You will find wearing the AFO uncomfortable and unusual at first, so you should gradually break in the AFO.

Day one - wear for 30 minutes

Day two 1-2 hours

Day three 3-4 hours

Day four 4-6 hours

Your skin should be checked every time you take the AFO off.

The AFO should be worn all day from getting dressed in the morning until getting ready for bed at night. If your orthotist specifies, anything different, please follow his/her instructions.

### Care of you AFO?

- Use a wet damp cloth to wipe down the plastic aspect of the AFO
- Fluff and hair can be removed from the velcro straps by picking them off or by a small wire brush.
- If you find you are getting a build-up of fluff or sweat at the heel section of the AFO this shows that your heel is not in the splint correctly. If the heel is not in correctly this will/ may lead to red marks. Contact your Orthotist for advice.
- Any joints should be cleaned regularly using a dry toothbrush or similar to remove dirt and dust etc.
- Look after the AFO and return it to the orthotic department for any repairs. You should never attempt to modify or adjust it yourself.

### Further appointments

Following the initial supply of your first AFO(s) a review appointment is usually made for about 6 -8 weeks, at the discretion of the Orthotist.

After this initial review appointment you are responsible for making any further appointments required.

### Contact Us

This leaflet is produced for patients who have been provided with an ankle foot orthosis by the Forth Valley Orthotic service.

We hope you will find this information useful.

If you require any further information, or are unable to attend your appointment, please telephone the orthotics department in Stirling community hospital.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Orthotics office and speak to either Catherine, Agnes or Deborah.

Office hours 8.30am - 4.30 pm

Monday - Friday

Telephone number **01786 434062 Press 2**

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**Livilands Gate**

**Stirling**

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## Orthotics Department



## Advice following supply of your Ankle Foot Orthosis



Advice for parents and  
carers

Your Orthotist is