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Guidelines For Wearing And Caring For Your Ankle-Foot Orthosis

General Information

Your custom designed Ankle-Foot Orthosis (AFO) will help correct and maintain the proper alignment and position of your ankle and foot. Ankle and foot alignment is vital for balancing and distributing your body weight. Your AFO will help correct mild to moderate foot problems and reduce associated pain. You may experience slight discomfort as you adjust to the new orthosis and proper alignment position. The adjustment period normally ranges from one to six weeks.

The following wearing and care guidelines will help you be as comfortable as possible during this time.

Wearing Guidelines

Wear Time

Unless otherwise instructed by your orthotist, start slowly. Adjusting to a new AFO is like breaking in a new pair of shoes. Wear your orthosis one hour on the first day and limit yourself to low or moderate activities. Gradually increase your wearing time by one to two hours each day. You should also increase your activity level during this transition period. Soon you will be comfortable wearing your AFO all day. You will achieve the greatest long-term benefits when you consistently wear your orthosis every day.

Pain

Remove your AFO if you experience any pain or discomfort. Check your skin for areas of irritation. Some pinkness is expected in areas of maximum correction or support. However, redness should disappear within 20 minutes after the orthosis is removed. Try wearing the orthosis again after waiting for one or two hours. If you feel sharp, or jabbing pressure over bony areas, or if skin redness lasts longer than 20 minutes, make an appointment with your orthotist at SCOPe for an adjustment as soon as possible.

Skin Care

Wash your legs and feet every day with mild soap and warm water. Make sure to clean well between your toes and the bottoms of your feet where bacteria collects. Rinse your skin well with clean water. Towel dry your skin thoroughly. The best time to wash is at night before bedtime. Your skin will be fresh and dry in the morning.

Wearing a cotton sock or stocking (which is a little higher than the top of your orthosis) under your AFO will help reduce friction and keep your skin dry. During hot and humid weather, sprinkle a little baby powder on your legs and feet before putting on the socks. You may also wish to change socks a few times during the day. These simple tips will help minimize perspiration. Check your leg, ankle and foot carefully every day for any red or tender areas. Such areas could indicate that your shoes do not fit properly, or your AFO needs an adjustment.

Shoes

Select good shoes with proper support. Always try them on with the AFO to make sure you have the most comfortable fit possible. The best shoes feature a closed back and closed toe; fitting over the feet like laced-up sport shoes. Choose low heels and shoes that are slightly wider to accommodate the AFO. You may notice knee or back pain if the heel height is incorrect. Your shoes must be laced snugly to hold your foot securely in place.

Care

Your new orthosis is made from state-of-the-art materials. With typical moderate use and proper care, your new AFO should last more than one year. Clean your AFO whenever it becomes dirty or has an unpleasant odor. Wipe with a damp cloth. If odor persists, you can use water and mild soap. Do not soak it in water. Be sure to rinse well to eliminate unwanted soap residue. Allow the AFO to dry at room temperature. Direct heat can damage your AFO. Do not use a hair dryer or place it near a heater.

Remember...

Never attempt to repair or adjust your AFO yourself. Your orthotist will schedule periodic visits to make sure your AFO is working properly. Contact the Nobbe Orthopedics patient care facility whenever you need help or have any questions. Your practitioner will work closely with you and your physician to ensure the best orthotic treatment possible.

