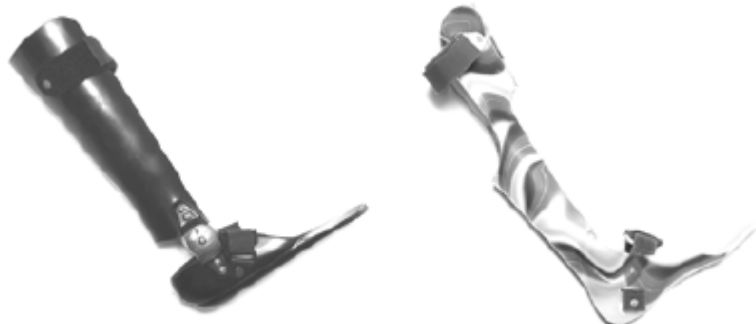


# Patient information

## Guidelines for the use of ankle foot orthosis (AFO)

### What are AFOs?

AFOs are designed to hold the foot and ankle in a corrected position. This might be to improve your walking, to give you a stable base for standing, or to prevent deformity.

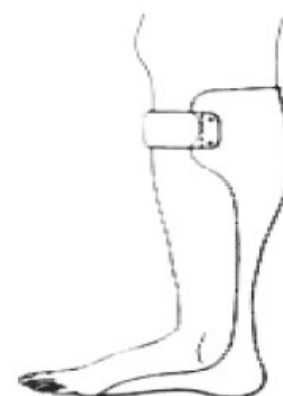


### Putting on an AFO

It is important that you put your AFO on properly to make it comfortable and prevent rubbing.

A close fitting cotton sock should be worn between your skin and AFO.

Your heel should then be firmly inserted into the AFO and the straps fastened securely. Your footwear should then be fitted around your AFO.



### Finding footwear

The footwear that is worn with your AFO is very important. There are a few things that you should consider when deciding on footwear:

- If you are buying footwear always take the AFO with you
- You will need to consider at least one shoe size increase for the fitting
- Lace ups and Velcro are preferable as they give the most adjustment. The lower they open down the tongue of the shoe the better
- A removable inlay is very useful. By removing this you can create more space for your AFO.
- High heels are not desirable, 1-1.5cm maximum. As the splint is set at a specific angle too high a heel can tip the knee forward too much

If you have any difficulties finding footwear then please speak with your orthotist.

### How long should they be worn?

At first, the AFO may feel uncomfortable so they should be worn gradually using the following schedule.

Day 1: 30-60 mins   Day 2: 1-2 hours   Day 3: 3-4 hours   Day 4: 4-5 hours

Your orthotist or physiotherapist will advise you how long you should build up to, or what activities to wear them for.

## What about red marks?

- You should check the skin around the foot and ankle every time you take the AFO off
- It is normal to see red marks where pressure has been applied. These should disappear within 30 minutes
- If you notice any sores or blistering you should stop using the AFO and contact your orthotist for advice as they may need adjusting
- Long socks can help with protecting the skin

## Cleaning

The AFO should be cleaned with a damp cloth and towel dried – heat will distort the shape. Do not soak it or use any detergents.

Any fluff or hair can be picked out of the Velcro straps

## Remember

- Break your AFO in gradually. It should be at least two weeks before you are wearing it full time
- Redness and irritation is normal whilst breaking in your AFO. This should disappear after 20-30mins
- It is normal to experience some muscle soreness and aching as your body adjusts to the wearing of an AFO
- The right footwear selection is important in order to achieve the best from your AFO
- If you have any problems or questions, do not hesitate to contact the department
- Check the device regularly for signs of weakness or damage

## Contact us

Tel: 0300 131 4787 direct Line

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## Consent

Although you consent for this treatment, you may at any time after that withdraw such consent. Please discuss this with your medical team.

## Sources of information

**British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists (BAPO)**

Website: [www.BAPO.org](http://www.BAPO.org)

**NHS Scotland Scottish Diabetes Group - Foot Action Group**

## Important information

This patient information is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

## Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4784 or by email at: [esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net)

## Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

## Other formats

**If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or [esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net)**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

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## Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:  
Philip King, Orthotist  
Lesley Baker, Service Manager

The Clinical Specialty/Unit that have agreed this patient information leaflet:  
Community Health and Integrated Care

Next review date: June 2025  
Responsible clinician/author: Melanie Burgess, Orthotics Team Lead

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