



Orthotics

Orthotics and ankle-foot orthotics (AFOs) are one of our most useful, effective and versatile treatments. Our podiatrists are skilled at custom-designing these devices to precisely control function and resolve your problem. The doctors evaluate the biomechanics of your gait themselves, then take a mold of your foot, still the most exacting method, with their own hands. One of the nation's highest-tech orthotics lab then creates your devices to high tolerances. If needed, we can make most adjustments right in the office. Our podiatrists are committed to providing the best in foot orthotic therapy, and they know that it is a function of their own skill and experience.

What are Orthotics?

The term "orthotic" can refer to almost any device which is worn inside a shoe. Items called "orthotics" can be found in infomercials, retail stores and even at trade shows. There are three very different types of "orthotics" – custom, customized and off-the-shelf. The educated consumer should be aware of each type.

There is a confusing amount of information available on orthotics. For many consumers, making an informed decision is difficult. Recognizing a sales pitch and separating it from facts is the key to better health. The information in this section should provide the information you need to make an informed decision.

What are Custom Orthotics?

Custom orthotics are a specialty of the podiatrists at Advanced Regional Center for Ankle and Foot Care. Our facility is fully accredited by the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics.

Custom foot orthotics are prescription medical devices made from non-weight bearing molds of your feet. They are designed to control alignment and function of the foot to treat or prevent injury-causing motions such as pronation (rolling-in) and supination (rolling-out). They also act to make activities such as running, walking and even standing more efficient. Finally, they can act to redistribute pressure on the bottom of the foot to relieve pain from excessive pressure or calluses.

How do Custom Foot Orthotics work?

Most foot pain is the result of a faulty relationship between the bones and muscles of the foot. Even the slightest misalignment can result in significant discomfort. This abnormal function can result in problems such as bunions, hammer toes, arch and heel pain, corns, knee pain and back pain.

The function of custom orthotics is much more than an arch support. Orthotics realign the structures of the foot and leg to prevent bone malalignment as well as muscle, tendon and ligament fatigue. They are often used after surgery to help stop the recurrence of foot deformities.

As your foot rests on the orthotic, it is gently and consistently directed into the correct position for walking, running and standing.

Because your foot is now functioning properly, the pain of muscle strain and pressure points is relieved, and the progression of deformities is stopped or slowed.

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Production of Custom Orthotics

Proper production of custom orthotics is an exacting process and determines if you receive quality devices that will best treat your condition. As with everything, there are well-made orthotics and poorly-made orthotics. The ability of an orthotic device to eliminate your pain is dependent on the quality of the orthotics. The quality of the orthotics is dependent on three primary steps:

1. The cast of your feet
2. The prescription the doctor writes (based on the examination and the doctor's knowledge and experience)
3. The work of the orthotic lab in producing your orthotics

Some Conditions Treated with Orthotic Therapy:

- Heel and arch pain
- Bunions
- Big toe joint pain
- Bunions
- Big toe joint pain
- Pain in the ball of the foot
- Achilles tendonitis
- Flat feet
- High arches
- Athletic injuries
- Bone spurs
- Ankle injuries
- Unstable ankles
- Shin splints
- Arthritic conditions
- Drop foot
- Back, hip and knee pain associated with foot function

What is Involved in Producing Custom Foot Orthotics?

The most important factor in designing foot orthotics that will provide optimum function is a thorough examination by an experienced and knowledgeable medical practitioner. The examination in our office includes a complete biomechanical examination and gait analysis.

Following a biomechanical and gait examination, there are three important components to ensure you receive the best possible orthotic devices:

- An accurate cast of your foot must be taken. This is a very exacting process as your foot must be placed in a precise position to ensure the best clinical outcomes. To help ensure that a proper cast is taken, we feel that the doctor, not a technician, should take the cast of your foot.
- A proper prescription must be written to accommodate your biomechanical problems, your activities and your shoes. This process requires that an exacting gait evaluation and biomechanical examination be performed.
- A high-quality foot orthotics laboratory should be used to produce your orthotics. This will ensure that the prescription is filled correctly, that the orthotics are comfortable and that high-quality and long-lasting materials are used.

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Dispensing and Break-in:

Our doctors will work with you to ensure that your orthotics are comfortable and are relieving your symptoms. They will also provide you detailed information on the proper shoes for your feet. This will help you find appropriate, comfortable and fashionable shoes.

Follow-up

When properly prescribed and produced, foot orthotics are very comfortable. In fact, you should barely be aware that you are wearing them. It is our responsibility to make sure that your orthotics are comfortable and that they are providing the best biomechanical solution to your foot problem.

One of the most important parts of orthotic therapy is appropriate follow-up. If you have a problem with orthotic fit, function, comfort, shoe fit or any other issue, your doctor must be able to diagnose and correct these concerns. Our doctors can diagnose and treat nearly every orthotic problem. Make an appointment today for professional care in all aspects of orthotic therapy.

Off-the-Shelf Orthotics

Off-the-shelf orthotics (often called arch supports) are usually found in retail stores, sport stores, shoe stores, online stores, and pharmacies. They are non-custom devices designed to provide gentle support to the arch of the foot and help spread weight more evenly along the bottom of the foot. They are sometimes called "prefabricated orthotics".

There are many different arch supports on the market. Like everything else, some are better than others. Quality off-the-shelf orthotics usually cost \$30.00-\$60.00.

Our Recommendations for Over-the-counter Arch Supports

We have evaluated many of the arch supports on the market and carry some high-quality OTC supports in our office. We have found the Advanced Ultra Orthotic the most supportive and the best choice for heel pain, arch pain and ball-of-foot pain. It runs about \$120 and is dispensed through our offices.

Orthotics and Insurance

Custom foot orthotics are a very cost-effective treatment for many foot and lower extremity conditions and are often covered by insurance plans. Every plan is different, and some plans exclude payment for durable medical equipment items such as foot orthotics. If you are a candidate for orthotic therapy, you will want to find out if your plan pays for orthotics, pays partially, or does not pay at all. Our office staff will gladly make every effort to assist you in gathering this information from the insurance company.

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