

## **Break In Process, Care and Maintenance of Your Ankle Foot Orthosis (AFO)**

**North Metro Orthotics and Prosthetics does not recommend driving while wearing the AFO unless the brace is designed to allow full downward and upward motion (plantarflexion and dorsiflexion) of the foot.**

### **Putting on your AFO**

This applies to custom AFO or off the shelf (OTS) AFO.

Please be seated for donning your AFO to avoid injuries.

**If the foot plate of the AFO is full length (plastic comes all the way to the toes) you may want to remove the original insert that is inside the shoe to allow more space in the shoe to accommodate the AFO. If the AFO is not full length, you may choose to remove the original insert to allow for additional space or leave it inside so that it may provide cushion and protection under the areas where the foot plate cuts off.**

### **Method 1**

- Always wear socks extending above the AFO.
- Place your leg and foot into the AFO ensuring that the heel sinks into the heel cup of the AFO. This will allow the proper straps to be secure properly if there is any.

- Secure all straps, if they are available. All straps should be secure and snug. Do Not over tight the straps, it may cause discomfort and injuries.
- After your foot is properly secure in the AFO with all available straps properly secured, place your foot (with the AFO) into the shoe. You may need a shoe horn to help guide the heel of the AFO and your foot into the shoe.
- Once you have properly and successfully inserted your foot (with the AFO) into the shoes, secure the shoes by tightening the shoelaces, Velcro or however the shoe was designed for tightening.

### **Method 2**

- Always wear socks extending above the AFO.
- Place the AFO into the shoe.
- Insert your foot into the AFO that is now in the shoe.
- Ensure that your heel is flush inside the AFO with the heel fully inside the heel cup of the AFO. Be sure that your socks are not rolled or curled back anywhere on your foot. This will cause discomfort while ambulating with the AFO. If the socks are rolled or curled back, remove your foot out of the AFO, fix the curled or rolled area and start the donning process over. You may

also be able to uncurl or unroll the socks by pulling on the socks at the areas that are curled or rolled.

- Secure all straps, if they are available. All straps should be secure and snug. Do Not over tight the straps, it may cause discomfort and injuries.
- Once your foot is properly secure in the AFO and all available straps are tightened, secure the shoes onto your foot and AFO by tightening the shoelaces, Velcro or however the shoe was design for tightening.

## **Wearing your AFO**

- Do not wear your AFO all day on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of wearing your AFO.
- **1<sup>st</sup> day:** Wear your AFO for 60 minutes interval (1 hour), then rest for 30 minutes interval. Check your foot for excessive pressure areas, redness, blisters and skin break down. When resting, you may continue your daily activities without wearing the AFO if it is possible.
  - **Continue the 60 minutes interval (1 hour) of wear time with 30 minutes interval of rest throughout the day.**
- With each day, increase the wear time by 60 minutes interval (1 hour) with 30 minutes interval of rest rotation until you can wear the AFO for the whole day.

- **Example:**

- 1<sup>st</sup> day: Wear 60 minutes interval (1 hour) and 30 minutes interval of rest throughout the day.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> day: Wear 120 minutes interval (2 hours) and 30 minutes interval of rest throughout the day.
- Continue this process until you can wear the AFO for the whole day.

- **Exceptions:**

- If you are wearing your AFO for exercising such as walking or jogging, before you can wear the AFO for a full day, reduce your wear time by half.
- It is normal for your heel to slightly slip out inside your AFO but if there is gross slippage of the foot, please consult and Orthotist. It is also normal for your foot with the AFO to slightly slip out at the heel of the shoe due to the natural articulation of your ankle and foot but if there is gross slippage, please consult your Orthotist.
- Wearing only one AFO may sometime cause the hip to be unlevel and create discomfort. Should this be the case, you will need to lift the opposite leg up by using a heel lift inside the shoe of the shorter side, insert proper insert material inside the shoe to lift the

shorter leg or have the contralateral shoe's sole lifted.

## Care and Maintenance of your AFO.

Proper care and maintenance of AFO increase the life, maintain proper functionality and reduces bacterial build up.

- At the end of each wear, remove the AFO from the shoe and air dry it.
- **(DO NOT WASH THE FOOT ORTHOTICS IN A WASHING MACHINE)** Clean the AFO weekly by gently whipping the AFO with a soft damp cloth. You may use a damp cloth with mild detergent soap. Wipe down the excess water and soap with a dry towel or cloth and air dry the AFO. **(DO NOT DRY THEM IN A DRYER).**

## Checking your skin

- Inspect all the skin that touches the AFO. Look for red areas, skin irritation or swelling. Check the bottom and the sides of the foot as well.
- It is normal to have pressure mark and redness, but it should disappear within 20 to 30 minutes to be normal.
- If there are any excessive pressure area, redness, skin irritation, skin break down and swelling that does not go away, stop wearing the AFO and Immediately call the office for an assessment or consultation.
- Do not subject the AFO to high temperatures such as inside a closed

car on a hot sunny day near a heater or fireplace.

- Even after the break in period, continue to inspect your skin at the areas where the brace comes into contact and the AFO for defects. If there is any signs of skin issue or brace defect, please contact the office.

## Special instructions

---

---

---

---

If you have questions about the use, care and maintenance of your AFO, please contact the office.

### Coon Rapids Office

8:00am - 4:30pm M-F

3111 - 124<sup>th</sup> Ave. NW, Suite 210

Coon Rapids, MN 55433

### Fridley Office

8:00am – 4:30pm M-F

890 University Ave., Suite 310

Fridley, MN 55330

### Osseo Office

8:00am – 4:30pm Thursday and by appointments

10 central Ave

Osseo, MN 55369

Phone: (763) 784-6647

Fax: (763) 784-7747