

## Proper Hygiene

Proper hygiene is essential in order to maintain skin integrity and avoid unnecessary problems. Any skin covered by the orthosis should be washed daily with warm water and mild soap. Generous rinsing ensures removal of all lather since dried soap irritates the skin. Thoroughly clean the bottoms of your feet and between the toes to avoid bacteria and dirt collection. The skin should be completely dry before wearing the orthosis. Shaving your legs may cause an itchy rash or skin irritation.

AFOs should be cleaned regularly with alcohol or mild soap and water. Do not soak the orthosis in water or attempt to hasten drying by using a hair dryer or placing the device in front of a heater. Your orthosis may be towel dried or left to dry at room temperature. Talcum powder will help prevent odors.

Maintenance of a metal orthosis includes keeping the leather clean, replacing leather or Velcro as necessary, and oiling hinges. Metal parts may need to be reshaped periodically by the orthotist.

If any part of your brace becomes cracked or broken, make an appointment to come in for the repairs. Worn fabric portions should also be replaced on any type of orthosis.

## Scheduled Visits

You should schedule a follow-up visit now that you have received your orthosis. It is necessary to be seen to make sure the orthosis fits properly, is providing the required support, and that it doesn't cause any undue pressure or discomfort.

Future visits and orthotic maintenance checks may also be set at a schedule determined by your individual needs. Following this schedule will offer you peace of mind and guarantee that your orthosis is offering you maximum support, comfort and assistance.

### **Thank You**

We would like to thank you for selecting our services. Our team of skilled professionals is dedicated to providing you with the highest level of orthopedic care and to designing the device best suited to helping you attain the greatest degree of function.

We trust you will be pleased with your orthosis.

Following these suggestions should avert any problems, but if you have a concern, please notify us at once.

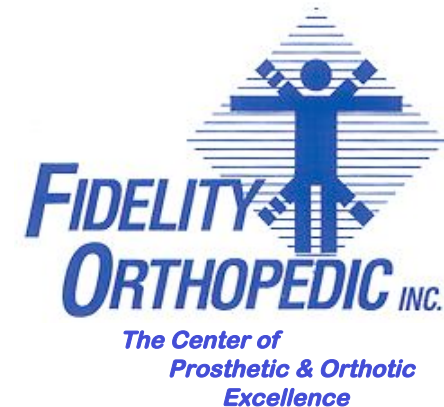
Wear your orthosis in good health!

**Central, serving Montgomery County at:**

**8514 N. Main Street  
Dayton, OH 45415  
937/228-0682**

**&**

**7677 Yankee Street, Suite 210  
Centerville, OH 45459  
937/435-7041**



**After-Care  
Guidelines  
for  
AFOs  
and  
KAFOs**

## **Introduction**

You've just received your new orthosis. If this is your first device, you may have some questions as to its care and use. An understanding of the orthosis will ease many concerns you may have initially.

Your orthosis was designed in accordance with the highest standards of modern medical technology by a certified orthotist, an expert trained to fabricate, fit, and maintain your custom-made device. You should arrange a follow-up visit to ensure that everything is functioning properly.

In the meantime, you will be getting accustomed to wearing your new orthosis. It may help to think of it as a friend. Like a friend, it will offer support and generally make life more pleasant. But the relationship also requires some care, attention, and concern on your part.

Often a new orthosis needs a slow break-in regimen. It may take as long as a month before the device can be worn full-time, so don't become discouraged.

The standard break-in schedule consists of *wearing the orthosis for one hour the first day* and then checking for excess redness, *then increasing the wearing time by one hour each day until you have reached seven to eight hours per day.* (Your orthotist may change the wearing schedule for your particular needs.) After this "breaking-in period" you can wear the brace all day.

Breaking-in the orthosis allows you to closely monitor your skin for problems. It also allows the body to become accustomed to wearing a device.

Heeding the following tips will make wearing an orthosis a positive, rewarding experience and the device will respond as the strong, supportive "friend" it was designed to be.

## **General Wear**

Your orthotist will have shown you how to put on and remove the orthosis at the time of your final fitting. An Ankle/Foot Orthosis (AFO) or a Knee/Ankle/Foot Orthosis (KAFO) must always be worn with a shoe since it is extremely slippery, unstable and ineffectual without one. Either fasten the orthosis first and then put on the shoe, or slide the orthosis into the shoe and, using the device as a "shoehorn", slip your foot into both. You will determine which method is more natural and comfortable.

Always wear a sock, stocking or similar garment under the orthosis to reduce friction and protect your skin from perspiration. Remember to keep the sock wrinkle-free without placing excess pressure on your toes. Using talcum powder and changing the sock promptly after perspiration buildup will also keep you more comfortable. Natural fiber socks such as cotton allow better air circulation and absorption of perspiration.

It's important to maintain the same shoe-heel height for which your orthosis was designed. Excessive height strains your knees and back creating instability. Heels which are too low may also cause knee and back pain. As we have explained, shoes worn with an orthosis should provide sufficient support; slippers, sandals and loafers are inappropriate. Shoes with four to five eyelets work well with AFOs.

Patients with metal or plastic AFOs should check regularly for signs of skin pressure and irregular shoe wear, reporting either to your orthotist.

## **Self-Examination**

Your orthosis was made to fit you properly and provide the greatest possible degree of comfort. Like breaking-in a new pair of shoes, it may take a brief period before the orthosis feels natural. Follow your orthotist's instructions regarding the length of time to wear the device as you build-up your tolerance.

A properly fit orthosis exerts a firm, steady pressure, similar to an open-palm hand pushing against the skin. It should not cause any sharp, stabbing pain or create bruises, calluses or blisters. Should this occur, call us immediately and arrange an appointment for adjustment.

Occasionally, extended periods of standing or hot, humid weather will result in some swelling. Remove the orthosis and elevate your leg until the swelling subsides. If it persists or becomes painful, notify your orthotist at once.

It is also important to maintain a relatively constant weight. Your orthosis was custom-designed for your weight and dimensions and any extreme gain or loss may cause improper fit. You will need to visit us if this should occur. Growing youngsters should be monitored at regular intervals to maintain proper fit.

Daily examination of skin in contact with the orthosis should become a habit. A new orthosis may cause some redness which should disappear within fifteen to thirty minutes after removing the device. If the redness does not disappear, make an appointment to have this checked.

Diabetics and people with lessened skin sensation are especially vulnerable to skin irritation, particularly in bony areas such as the shin, or on the bottoms of feet. **Extra care should be taken and even minor skin irritations should be treated promptly.**