

Orthotics Department

Information for adult patients



www.smart.scot.nhs.uk/service/orthotics

What is an Orthotist?

An Orthotist is a fully qualified healthcare professional who specialises in knowledge of biomechanical movements of the body. An Orthotist assesses for and designs various different orthoses to: help with walking; prevent deformities; improve hand function; allow wheelchair dependents to safely use standing frame; and reduce pain in joints or soft tissues.

What is an orthosis?

An orthosis is a support which is worn anywhere on the body from head and neck, spine, arms and hands, to legs and feet, or is placed in a shoe to improve the foot position and aid walking. It can be made of different materials such as plastic, rubber, or fabric with metal hinges. These can be either off-the-shelf stock products, or made especially for you. It also includes specialised footwear.

What conditions benefit from orthoses?

Many conditions which affect mobility can be aided with orthoses. These include, but are not limited to: Stroke, spinal injuries, Motor Neurone Disease, multiple sclerosis (MS), Charcot Marie Tooth (CMT), osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and diabetes.

Orthoses can improve the symptoms of chronic joint or muscle pains and be used to treat musculoskeletal conditions like: plantar fasciitis, flat feet, muscle/tendon strains, and ligament sprains.

What will I expect at the appointment?

The Orthotist will ask about your relevant medical history (e.g. what has caused limb weakness, where you experience pain, or what other ailments you have). We will also want to know what your aims and goals are from your treatment. There will be assessment of your joint ranges of motion, muscle powers, foot posture and walking. Following this you will be informed of our recommendations and will discuss different stock or custom made options. If it is agreed that a custom made Ankle Foot Orthosis (AFO) is needed then we will take a plaster cast of the leg from calf to the end of your toes. This takes around 5 minutes to set and will be removed and then used to manufacture the AFO. Sometimes we will draw around your feet, or put them into a box with soft compressible foam or take lots of different measures depending on which support/footwear is needed.

Do I need to prepare for the appointment?

Yes, please bring a pair of shorts for assessment. If possible please have a bath or shower on the morning of your appointment.

How long will the appointment take?

Please allow 30 minutes to one hour depending on what we are assessing.

Will I receive an orthosis at my first appointment?

You may be given a stock orthosis at the first appointment or you may have to come back for a fitting appointment of something which is custom made or ordered specially for you (this is usually 4-6 weeks from the date of your first appointment).

What if I cannot make the appointment date or time?

Please give as much notice as possible if you cannot attend as this will allow our administration team to offer the appointment slot to someone else on our waiting list. This means that your new arranged appointment may be sooner too. **If you fail to attend without notifying the orthotic department then you may be removed from the waiting list.**

Alternative formats

For a copy of this booklet in larger print, Braille, or your community language (Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Urdu or Polish), please call **0131 536 9434**

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