Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

A Guide to your Fabric Ankle Foot Orthosis (AFO)

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Patient Information

Surgical Appliances

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What is an Ankle Foot Orthosis (AFO)?

An Ankle Foot Orthosis or AFO, is a brace worn on the lower leg. It is designed to control the range of motion in the foot and ankle, and maintain them in an optimum position for standing and walking. Some AFOs are fabric like yours, or have a joint/hinge at the ankle, whilst others are fixed in one position, and they may be worn on one foot or both feet.

The AFO will be matched to your specific needs – as each person is unique, so is their response to treatment.

What are AFOs prescribed for?

AFOs are prescribed for a number of reasons, including:

- To make walking easier
- To keep your foot and ankle in a better position
- To provide support to weakened muscles
- To reduce the risk of falls
- To reduce pain

What shoes can be worn with an Fabric AFO?

It is advisable that the Fabric AFO should not come into direct contact with skin, so you should wear cotton socks or tights beneath the device to prevent chafing. Ensure the socks/tights are pulled up, to avoid any wrinkles. You must wear the correct footwear in order for the Fabric AFO to work properly. When deciding your footwear choice, consider:

- Lace fastenings are preferred; but Velcro fastening is also a option.
- Slip-on and open-heeled shoes are not appropriate.

Putting on the Fabric AFO

The person who fits your brace will explain how to do this. Once you are at home, continue to use the same method:

See images and instructions in the manufacturer’s information booklet for further information; these should be supplied to you alongside the Fabric AFO.

1. Undo the shoelaces of the shoe and place the shoe insert between the tongue of the shoe and the shoelaces (narrowest end towards the toes). Re-do the shoelaces OR insert metal hooks into eyelet holes.
2. With the Achilles tendon gel pad at the bottom, wrap the support around the leg, just above the ankle, and fasten snugly with the Velcro strapping.
3. Bend the traction elastic, feed through the D-ring and attach to the hook on the shoe insert
4. Pull the elastic to obtain the desired traction and secure onto the ankle support with the Velcro fastenings.

To use the Fabric AFO without footwear, you will need to fit the **Shoeless Wrap:**

1. Place the wrap around the foot, (ensuring that the hook is pointing towards the toes) and secure with the Velcro straps.
2. Follow the instructions above from No. 2 onwards

(Please note, the shoeless option may not be recommended for you, discuss with your Orthotist for further information)

How long should the Fabric AFO be worn for?

It takes a while to get used to wearing an AFO, and it may feel uncomfortable to start with. Build up wear time over a few weeks, until you can wear it as required:

Day 1: 30-60 minutes

Day 2: 1-2 hours

Day 3: 2-4 hours

Day 4-7: 4-6 hours

Week 2: 6+ hours or then as required

The length of time you should wear the AFO for will vary. Some users wear them constantly, others only for a few hours. Your Orthotist will give you recommendations tailored for you. Steps, stairs and slopes can feel very different when you are using an AFO. Take extra care and use handrails where possible.

Skin care

- You should check the skin around the ankle and foot (especially if wearing a shoeless wrap), every time you take off your Fabric AFO, especially over the bony areas and around the edges of the Fabric AFO.
- If you notice any blisters or sores, you should stop using the Fabric AFO and contact your Orthotic Department for advice as your prescription may need reviewing.
- Be particularly careful with visual checks if you suffer from poor sensation.
- Don’t worry if you see red marks – these are normal and should disappear within 30 minutes following removal of the Fabric AFO. If they do not disappear in this timescale, please stop wearing the Fabric AFO and contact your Orthotic Department.

Care of the Fabric AFO

It is important that the Fabric AFO is kept clean and in good working order.

- When not being worn, stick the Velcro parts together; this protects the Velcro.

- Close all Velcro fastenings before washing
- Hand wash only in cool water with mild detergent
- Use a dry towel to absorb excess moisture and leave to dry at room temperature away from direct heat.
- Do not iron.
- Do not allow the product to come into contact with alcohol or solvents

Contact details

Orthotics Department:

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Telephone:

0300 707 1229 / 0300 707 4055 / 0300 707 6220

Monday to Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm



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