

Cleaning

The AFO should be cleaned with a damp cloth and towel dried – heat will distort the shape. Do not soak it or use any detergents.

Any fluff or hair can be picked out of the Velcro straps.

Remember

- Break your AFO in gradually. It should be at least two weeks before you are wearing it full time.
- Redness and irritation is normal whilst breaking in your AFO. This should disappear after 30-60mins.
- It is normal to experience some muscle soreness and aching as your body adjusts to the wearing of an AFO.
- The right footwear selection is important in order to achieve the best from your AFO.
- If you have any problems or questions, do not hesitate to contact the department.
- Check the device regularly for signs of weakness or damage.

Useful organisations

- British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists (BAPO)
www.bapo.com
Tel: 0845 166 8490
- International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO)
www.ispoint.org

Contact us

Orthotics Department
South Block
Royal Berkshire Hospital
London Road
Reading RG1 5AN

Tel: **0118 322 7552**

Your Orthotist is:

To find out more about our Trust visit
www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you would like this information in another language or format

NHS Orthotic Managers Group, May 2025
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Guidelines for the use of an ankle foot orthosis (AFO)

Information for patients

Department of Orthotics

This leaflet gives advice to patients requiring an AFO orthotic device to hold their foot and ankle in a corrected position.

What are AFOs?

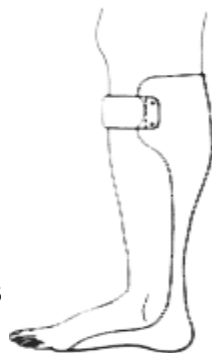
AFOs are designed to hold the foot and ankle in a more neutral position. This might be to improve your walking, to give you a stable base for standing, or to prevent deformity.



Putting on an AFO

It is important that you put your AFO on properly to make it comfortable and prevent rubbing.

- Wear a close fitting cotton sock between your skin and AFO.
- Your heel should then be firmly inserted into the AFO and the straps fastened securely.



- Your footwear should then be fitted around your AFO.

Finding footwear

The footwear that is worn with your AFO is very important. There are a few things that you should consider when deciding on footwear:

- If you are buying footwear, always take the AFO with you.
- You will need to consider at least one shoe size increase for fitting and ensure a good width.
- Lace ups and Velcro are preferable as they have the most adjustment. The lower down this opening of the shoe, the better.
- A removable inlay is very useful. By removing this, you can create more space for your AFO.
- High heels are not desirable, 1-1.5cm heel max. As the splint is set at a specific angle, too high a heel can tip the knee forward too much.
- If you have any difficulties finding footwear then please speak with your orthotist and they may be able to signpost you to footwear companies.

How long should they be worn?

At first, the AFO may feel uncomfortable so they should be worn gradually using the following schedule.

Day 1: 30-60 minutes

Day 3: 3-4 hours

Day 2: 1-2 hours

Day 4: 4-5 hours

Your orthotist will advise you how long you should build up to, or what activities to wear them for.

What about red marks?

You should check the skin around the foot and ankle every time you take the AFO off. It is normal to see red marks where pressure has been applied. These should disappear within 30-60 minutes.

If you notice any sores or blistering, you should stop using the AFO and contact your orthotist for advice, as they may need adjusting.

Long socks can help with protecting the skin.