

About your ankle foot orthosis (AFO)

Surgical Appliance Department
Tel: 01271 322492

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at ndht.pals@nhs.net.

What is an ankle foot orthosis?

An ankle foot orthosis is a moulded plastic splint to stabilize the foot and ankle. You may be given a pre-moulded splint or, if this is unsuitable, the orthotist will take a cast to have one specially made for you.

Why is it needed?

There are many different types of AFO. If you are suffering from a dropped foot, some will purely lift your foot. Other kinds will be closely moulded to lift the foot and stabilize it from side to side.

Different foot lengths are available, some finishing behind the ball of the foot whilst others have a full foot to the toe-end. The orthotist will decide which is best for your condition.

What is the best type of shoe to wear?

Where possible, it is best to wear a shoe with a fastening, as this will hold your foot onto the AFO. The best type of fastening is a lace as this is the most secure. Try to get a shoe that comes well up the instep – either a trainer or similar will do this. It is best to buy your shoes once you have the AFO as it will affect their fit.

How do I fit the AFO?

1. For comfort, wear a cotton sock underneath the AFO. The AFO is calf-length, so wear a sock that is the same length as the splint if possible.
2. Ensure your heel is well into the heel seat of the AFO.

If you are fitting the splint onto a child, it is best that you hold the front of the foot with one hand and the back of the AFO, with the other whilst sliding the foot into the splint. The orthotist will show you how to do this.

3. There will be a calf strap; this should be done up so it is comfortable.

4. If there is an instep strap, this needs to be done up firmly to hold the foot into the splint.
5. There may be a toe strap as well, to hold the forefoot onto the footplate. This also needs to be done up firmly but comfortably.

What should I do when I start to wear an AFO or if I'm given a new one?

At first, wear the splint for 30 – 60 minutes. Then remove the splint and your sock and check for any red areas on the ankle/foot. If these do not go within 10 minutes, the AFO may need to be adjusted. If so, please contact the Surgical Appliance/Orthotic Department 01271 322492 to arrange an appointment.

If after the first wearing, everything appears to be all right, gradually increase the time of wearing until you are sure you are not going to have any problems. Eventually the AFO can be worn all day.

How do I look after my AFO?

Do

- Have any worn or broken straps repaired.
- Keep the AFO away from direct heat, as it can distort the plastic.
- Keep it away from pets.

Do not

- Force the AFO on or force the splint into a tight shoe.
- Wash the AFO, as hot water can affect the fit. It can be sponged with fresh water if unlined.
- Try to adjust the AFO yourself as it is specifically designed for you and if adapted may not work.
- Give your splint to someone else, as it could cause problems for them.

Further information

If you have any problems or are unsure about your AFO, please contact the Surgical Appliance Officer, North Devon District Hospital.
Telephone: **01271 322492**.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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