

# Your child's ankle foot orthosis

**This leaflet provides information about your child's ankle foot orthosis.**

**If you have any questions, please contact the service your appointment is with. Details can be found at the end of this leaflet or in your appointment letter.**

## About your child's ankle foot orthosis

An ankle foot orthosis (AFO) is a device that helps support your child's ankle and foot. It also helps control movement in the knee and hip, making it easier to stand, balance, and walk, which can reduce pain and discomfort.

AFOs are often designed to have a close fit, especially around the ankle bones. They can be made from different types of material, depending on the type of support needed.

Your child's AFO will usually have Velcro™ strap at the calf and ankle. Some will also have a strap at the front of the foot, near the toes (forefoot). Some AFOs have additional pads in them, and some may also have a wedge of material under the heel.

## How to put on your child's AFO

You should follow these instructions to put on the AFO, unless your orthotist has told you otherwise.

### With an ankle strap

Follow these instructions if your child has been given an AFO with an ankle strap.

1. Your child's knees should be bent.
2. Hold the AFO behind their leg. Your child should then place their heel firmly into it.
3. Make sure their heel is firmly in contact with the heel of the AFO, and ask your child to raise their toes up towards their knee as much as possible.
4. Fasten the ankle-retaining strap firmly. If there is a forefoot strap, fasten this firmly too.
5. Fasten the calf strap.
6. Footwear can now be put on over the AFO, and should be fastened snugly.

### Without an ankle strap

Follow these instructions if your child has been given an AFO without an ankle strap.

1. Place the AFO inside your child's shoe, with the back of the AFO touching the back of their footwear.
2. Your child's knee should be bent, with the AFO behind their leg.
3. Your child should then put their toes into their footwear.
4. The AFO can then be used like a shoehorn. Ask your child to push down with their foot until their foot and heel are firmly in contact with the AFO.
5. Securely fasten the footwear and calf strap.

## When your child should wear their AFO

Your orthotist will let you know when your child should wear the AFO. At first, they should wear it for small amounts of time at home.

If your child needs to wear it during the day, you should speak to their teacher at school. You can also give them a copy of this leaflet.

## Choosing footwear

Your child's AFO will usually fit into any type of footwear, as long as it's wide and deep enough. Choose footwear with either laces or Velcro straps to make sure the AFO fits well and stays securely in place. If the shoe has an insole you might need to remove this, or choose a bigger size so that there is enough space for the AFO.

The AFO should not be worn with slip-on, shallow or high heeled shoes. Trainers are usually a good choice. Some school uniform policies do not allow trainers. If there's a problem, please ask your child's teacher to contact us, or give them a copy of this leaflet.

## Maintaining your child's AFO

At some point, the AFO will need some repairs. This may include replacing straps and any padding. If the AFO is damaged, please contact the orthotics service who will arrange the repairs for you.

Please do not try to make any changes or repairs to the AFO yourself.

## Looking after your child's AFO

### Do

- make sure your child wears a sock when wearing the AFO, to protect their skin
- have the AFO checked regularly, as specified by the orthotist
- make sure your child wears appropriate footwear when wearing the AFO
- check the AFO regularly for signs of wear, such as loose rivets, worn out Velcro straps, or cracked plastic
- clean the AFO with a sponge dipped in warm soapy water, and towel dry
- make sure your child wears the AFO as advised by the orthotist
- check your child's skin after wearing the AFO

### Don't

- do not place the AFO near sources of heat or extreme cold
- do not Attempt to adjust or modify the AFO
- do not cut, file or damage the AFO

## When to get help

The close fit of AFO can cause mild redness to the skin where pressure is applied. This is normal.

Contact the orthotics service as soon as possible if:

- you notice skin redness that lasts longer than 30 minutes after the AFO has been removed. This can be harder to see on brown or black skin
- you notice any breaks in your child's skin, such as sores or blisters
- your child has any pain, irritation, or increased rubbing of the skin when they are wearing the AFO

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's AFO please contact the orthotics service that their appointment is with:

If your child is a patient at **Bowley Close regional rehabilitation centre, Sunshine House**, or **Mary Sheridan Centre** **phone** 020 3039 7776 or **email** [gst-tr.gsttorthoticreferrals@nhs.net](mailto:gst-tr.gsttorthoticreferrals@nhs.net)

If your child is a patient at **King's College Hospital** **phone** 020 3299 3646, **email** [gst-tr.orthoticreferral@nhs.net](mailto:gst-tr.orthoticreferral@nhs.net)

Your appointment letter will tell you who your appointment is with, and where to go for your child's appointment.

## Evelina London medicines helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline, **phone** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm **email** [letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), **phone** 020 7188 8801 **email** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk). To make a complaint, contact the resolution department **phone** 020 7188 3514 **email** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your child's care in a different language or format, please contact the department where they have the appointment.

## NHS website

This website gives information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare. It can help you to take care of your child's health and wellbeing, **web** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## NHS 111

This service offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers. They are supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. The service is available by phone 24 hours a day, **phone** 111 **web** [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk) (111 online is for people aged 5 or over, and you need to call 111 to get help for a child under 5)



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