

## Using Your Ankle Foot Orthosis (AFO)

### **Ankle Foot Orthosis (AFO)**

The AFO is a brace that supports your ankle and foot. It can reduce pain, prevent further injury, promote healing and help you walk.

### **Wearing Your AFO**

Your AFO should not hurt to wear. You must get used to it. Slowly increase the amount of time you wear the brace. Wear a sock under the brace. The sock wicks sweat away from your skin and helps prevent rubbing. The sock should be snug so that there are no wrinkles. Check your skin often for sores. This is very important if you have partial or no feeling in your foot. On day one, check your skin every hour. Use a mirror to see the bottom of your foot or the back of your leg. Report any red marks that don't fade after 20 minutes to your orthotist as soon as you can. They will need to make changes to your brace.

### **Putting on Your AFO**

The AFO can be put on two ways. Try both methods to see which one works best for you. Your shoe is part of the bracing system. A solid shoe will last longer and provide you with more strength. Select a lace-up, oxford style or an athletic shoe with the insert removed. The shoes often need to be at least a ½ size larger and wider than your normal size.

**Method 1:** Place the AFO on your leg and foot. Lift your foot so that your leg crosses your other knee. Loosen your shoelaces or Velcro straps as wide as you can get them. Grab your ankle and AFO together while putting your shoe on over the AFO and foot. Fasten the calf strap and any other straps. Tighten and fasten your shoe.

**Method 2:** Place the AFO into your shoe. Loosen the shoelaces or Velcro straps as wide as you can get them. Slide your foot into AFO and shoe using the brace as a giant shoehorn. Fasten the calf strap and any other straps. Tighten and fasten your shoe.

### **General Guidelines**

Do not sleep in your AFO unless it has been made exactly for sleeping. Sleeping in your brace can cause sores (skin breakdown).

Never wear the brace without a shoe. The plastic is very slippery, and you may fall.

### **Cleaning Your AFO**

Wipe off the outside and inside with a damp, soapy cloth or a cloth dampened with rubbing alcohol. Dry it. The straps may be scrubbed with a brush on the smooth side. Let the straps air dry. The hook fastener will hold best if all the lint is removed, (a dental pick or safety pin works well to lift lint up from Velcro).

### **When to Call**

If you have more numbness, tingling, pain or are less able to move or do your normal activities call your clinic.

### **Who to Call**

Neurosurgery Clinic  
**(608) 263-1410**

Rehab Clinic  
**(608) 263-8412**

After hours, nights, weekends, and holidays, your call will be sent to the paging operator. Ask for the resident on call for your clinic. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back. The toll-free number is **1-800-323-8942**.

For adjustments or concerns about your AFO, call the Orthotics Clinic.

**UW Health at The American Center  
Orthotics**

4602 Eastpark Blvd.  
Madison, WI 53718  
**(608) 440-6677 or (844) 607-4800**

**UW Health Orthotics Clinic**

6220 University Ave.  
Middleton, WI 53562  
**(608) 263-0583 or (877) 894-9940**

**Middleton Rehab Orthotics**

6220 University Ave.  
Middleton, WI 53562  
**(608) 263-8412 or (800) 323-8942**

If you have an emergency, **call 911.**

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 3/2020 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#5933.