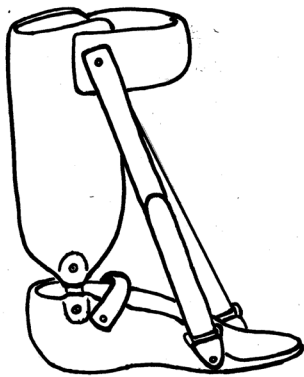


## Using Your Nighttime AFO with Stretching Straps at Home

### Purpose of the Nighttime AFO with Stretching Straps

Your nighttime AFO with stretching straps supports your ankle and foot. It provides a stretch to your muscles in the back of your leg. This helps reduce how much your foot points down. Improving the position of your foot and ankle can reduce pain, prevent further injury, promote healing and help with walking.



### Wearing Your Brace

Your brace should not hurt to wear. When you start wearing the brace, slowly increase the amount of time you wear it. You may want to try this during waking hours before trying to wear it overnight. Try it while in bed or reclined while watching a movie.

Wear a sock between your skin and the brace. The sock wicks sweat away from your skin and helps prevent rubbing between your skin and the foam. The sock should be snug enough so that there are no wrinkles. Check your skin for redness or rubbing every time you take it off.

Report any red marks on your skin that don't fade after 30 minutes as soon as you can so changes can be made.

### Putting on Your Nighttime AFO with Stretching Straps

Place the brace on your leg and foot. Make sure the heel of your foot is all the way down and back. You may need to loosen the side stretching straps to be able to do this.

Fasten the ankle strap first, make sure it is tightened at least to the mark drawn on it. This is the most important strap. It keeps your foot and ankle from sliding out of the brace. Then, fasten the calf strap. These straps are the only ones you need to fully open and close for putting on and taking off your brace.

The stretching straps along the sides provide the stretch to your ankle. If you have loosened these to get your heel all the way down, make sure you tighten them again. We have set and marked these straps for the correct amount of stretch today. When wearing the brace, always make sure these straps are tightened to the marks. Keep these side straps at this setting for the first 1-2 weeks.

After 1-2 weeks, tighten the stretching straps by about 1/8 inch (3 mm) to increase the stretch. Make a new line on the strap so you know how tight they should be. Continue to increase stretch by tightening and marking the straps about 1/8 inch every 1-2 weeks, as tolerated.

## **Guidelines**

You will only wear your nighttime AFO with stretching straps in bed. **Never walk with it on** unless a sole has been included on the bottom and you have been told this is okay. The plastic is very slippery. Sleeping in your brace should not cause sores or skin breakdown.

If your heel no longer stays down in the brace, this may mean the side straps have been tightened too much too quickly, and your ankle cannot bend that far yet. First, check to see if you can tighten the strap over the ankle more to get your heel all the way down and back. If not, then you will need to loosen the side stretching straps by 1/8 inch at a time until your heel is able to remain down in the brace.

## **Cleaning Your Brace**

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 lint is removed.

## **When to Call**

If your neurological symptoms get worse call the Neurosurgery or Rehab Clinic.

Symptoms include:

- More numbness
- Tingling
- Pain
- Less able to move or do normal activities

If you have concerns or need adjustments, call the Orthotics Clinic.

## **Who to Call**

Orthotics and Prosthetics Clinic  
6220 University Ave.  
Middleton, WI 53562  
**(608) 263-0583 or (844) 894-9940**

University Ave Rehabilitation Clinic  
6630 University Ave.  
Middleton, WI 53562  
**(608) 263-8412 or (800) 323-8942**

Orthotics and Prosthetics Clinic  
East Madison Hospital  
4602 Eastpark Blvd.  
Madison, WI 53718  
**(608) 440-6440 or (844) 607-4800**

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

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 © 9/2023 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#8147.