ORTHOTICS AND BRACES

Orthotics are custom made devices that fit inside your own shoes and are worn on a full time basis to help control the way your foot functions. There are many types of orthotic devices and advances in technology enable your podiatrist to prescribe a device specific to the activities that you participate in the most. Two feet are never alike and the same goes for orthotics. From walking to running, or aerobics to basketball, orthotics can help you perform at peak efficiency. Professional orthotics are made from impressions of your feet. Two feet are never alike so the devices are custom made for your feet only. Just as contact lenses or glasses improve vision, orthotics will help your podiatrist treat biomechanical abnormalities you may have. Orthotics may be used with children, adults, athletes, elderly patients and, very often, with patients following surgery or injury. Orthotics may be rigid, semi-rigid or soft (flexible) depending on individual needs. More rigid materials are used to help control the motion of the foot in functional orthotics while softer moldable materials are used in accommodative orthotics for diabetics with neuropathy and to offload areas of increased pressure. Just some of the conditions orthotics are used to treat are plantar fasciitis, heel spurs, Achilles tendonitis, calcaneal apophysitis, flatfoot deformities, posterior tibial tendonitis, tired aching feet, ankle pain, diabetic foot conditions and many more.

Prior to making an orthotic there are tests we can perform to determine whether an orthotic would be helpful for your condition. We often find that orthotics are overly prescribed for a variety of issues and we are very frugal in their use. If we think that it is something that will benefit you long-term, we will suggest it. However, if the cost to benefit ratio is low, we will try other things such as a prefabricated device first. These prefabricated devices are often utilized in patients that have mild deformities and work well with decreased cost. If they help but do not provide adequate relief however, we will suggest a custom molded device.

Orthotics may require a gradual break-in period. You may need to wear orthotics indefinitely, depending on how your foot function responds. Children who use orthotics for calcaneal apophysitis may only need them until the growth plate fuses. Orthotics have a variable life span depending upon your activities but they typically last for three to seven years. You may need periodic changes in your prescription as your foot function changes.

Some patients have conditions that require more than just an orthotic device. The braces used in our practice support both the foot and ankle. If your doctor diagnoses you with a problem (most likely a tendonitis or a tendon dysfunction) that affects structures of both the foot and ankle, the recommendation of an ankle-foot orthosis (brace) may be made to you. There are many braces that we recommend; however there are two basic types. The first is a brace that allows for normal ankle joint flexion. This one is used for more active patients with less severe pathology. The second is a brace that totally limits motion of the ankle joint. This one is used for longstanding, chronic conditions such as painful arthritis or diabetic foot and ankle problems.