

Argus Orthopaedic Zone

Orthotics May Be The Answer To Foot Pain

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

After I presented last week's article "Old Injuries Cause Foot and Ankle Pain" a light bulb went on.

Now is the proper time to tell you about orthotics. Most patients have heard of them and a lot are wearing some form of foot supports. But how much do you really know? Here goes.

You learned last week how really complex the foot and ankle are. Bones, joints, ligaments, muscles, tendons; Gasp! How do they all fit together and work right?

Answer = much of the time they don't. It's a lot to ask of two feet to do all that they are supposed to do and not hurt.

Enter the Orthotist

An Orthotist is a professional that specializes in design, development and fitting of special braces and devices that help to support or correct certain musculoskeletal problems.

Ortho - comes from the Greek work orthos which is translated as straight or upright. The Orthotist's professional designation is CPO meaning certified in prosthetics and orthotics.

Before patients see an Orthotist they usually have -

- Changed shoes x times (fill in the blank!)
- Tried over the counter foot supports (many)
- Magnetic inserts
- Had foot massages
- Used foot baths
- Tried all kinds of medication
- May have had physical therapy
- Lastly, nothing worked and they are discouraged.

Off The Shelf

Some of these products can help some people. There is no doubt. They are worth trying. I have done it myself. No harm in trying. There is no real down side except the expense. Don't sink a ton of

money into them. They can treat foot pain by slightly changing the angle of your foot. Most patients don't have a clue what condition they are treating, but they have pain.

Orthotic Evaluation

The Orthotist typically receives a prescription from an Orthopaedic Surgeon or a Podiatrist (sometimes the orthotics come directly from the Podiatrist's office). You will receive an evaluation from the Orthotist including -

- Gait analysis
- Foot evaluation for calluses and friction
- Evaluation of any foot and ankle surgery you have had
- Evaluate your activity level

Custom Foot Orthotics

A custom made orthotic can help in several ways. It cushions the foot and absorbs forces that occur with every foot strike.

It distributes forces more evenly across the entire foot reducing pressure on painful areas. Orthotics can add support and correct some structural problems. They can in *some patients* reduce pain in knees, hips and the lower back.

Cost however is a factor. They can cost \$300 - \$600 on average. They are always made on prescription, but in my experience some insurances will pay for them and some do not. YOU HAVE TO CHECK IT OUT IN ADVANCE.

Shoes

Oh yes, you don't just plop your custom orthotics on flip flops and go! Don't forget the shoes. They have to be able to accommodate the orthotics. Custom orthotics don't require a specially made shoe. It's best to have the Orthotist and the place providing the shoes work together so the shoes and orthotics are completely compatible.

Take care of your feet. You really can't afford not to.

Office Website and Argus Orthopaedic Zone Archive

Don't forget to check out the entirely new office website, www.orthopodsurgeon.com, Your Orthopaedic Connection and the Argus Orthopaedic Zone Archive of all back articles. You will be amazed! It is a huge amount of information about all the things I treat in the office and hospital.

Our goal is simple - To help people return to more pain free, functional lives. I specialize in you.

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush