

Facts about Orthotics

By: Jason Hildreth, DPT, OCS

Ask anyone to describe to you what an orthotic is and they will usually say "it is something you place in your shoe". They are not wrong; however they are not entirely right. An orthotic is an accessory to helping patients with their foot, knee, hip, and back pains, but it is not a cure. Nothing can replace exercising as a means to addressing most biomechanical limitations and weaknesses. With that said, Orthotics can act as a bridge to achieve an ability to regain the positioning in the foot to focus on certain muscle groups and reduce stress on others. If there is poor stability in the feet it can result in limitations in the patients' hips, knee, and even their back. Orthotics can provide a solid foundation for the patient to stand on. They help to redistribute pressure on the foot properly, and to reduce the overall pressure during walking and other activities (reducing pain symptoms). There are 2 different types of orthotics that individuals should be aware of: supportive and corrective.

Supportive orthotics are typical over the counter purchases. They support the patient's foot type without correcting it. They are generally too soft to provide any adequate stability. So in other words: if you have a flat foot, you will still have a flat foot when using them. **Corrective orthotics** on the other hand does provide the correction that is needed. They are built better and made to withstand the weight of the body. The orthotic itself is made from a thick plastic and its shape usually will vary depending on the foot.

At Orthopedic Partners we provide two different types of corrective orthotics: Full custom and Semi-custom orthotics. **Full custom orthotics** are designed to fit the person's foot perfectly through assessment using direct measurements, gait analysis video, digital pictures in standing, and plaster casting of the feet. This allows us to determine the maximal support and pressure relief needed for the individual. **Semi customs** are another alternative if insurance does not cover full customs. At Orthopedic Partners we use Quadrasteps. The patient is categorized in one of 6 different foot types, which is determined through foot measurements, gait analysis, and standing posture. Even though it's not full custom, it comes very close to providing maximal support and positioning that falls under a corrective orthotic.

If you feel that orthotics may be able to help you with your foot, knee, hip, or back pain please do not hesitate to contact us to help answer any questions you have.

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