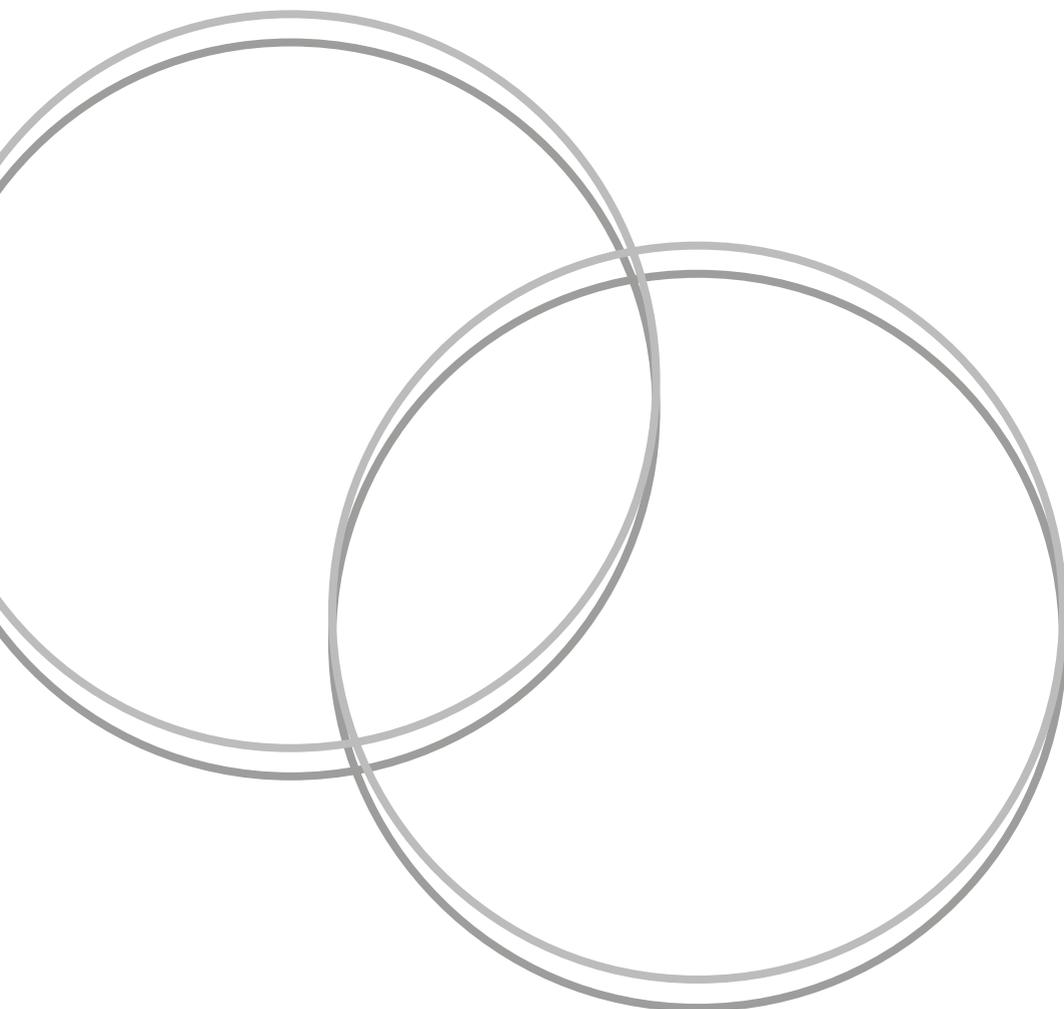


# Ankle Foot Orthoses (AFO)

**Information for patients**



## **What does an AFO do?**

An Ankle Foot Orthosis (AFO) is designed to control the forces affecting your foot and ankle. There are different designs and reasons for having an AFO, these might be to improve your walking, to provide a stable base for standing, or to prevent deformity.

## **How do I put it on**

Start by wearing a thin cotton sock between your skin and the AFO. Position your heel securely in the back of the AFO and fasten the ankle strap firmly and then the calf strap and toe strap if applicable. You can then put your shoe on. Or you can put the AFO inside the shoe first and then push your foot in before doing up the straps. Your Orthotist will advise on the best way of putting on your AFO at your fitting appointment.

## **Wear time and checking skin**

You should begin by using your AFO for short periods of time and then gradually build up. You should regularly check your skin for signs of pressure or rubbing. There might be some redness or marking initially, but this should disappear within 20 to 30 minutes.

If the AFO begins to hurt or damage the skin, you should immediately contact the Orthotics department for advice and a review appointment.

Your body needs to adapt to wearing the AFO, so a weaning in schedule should be used (see below).

Day 1	30 to 60 minutes
Day 2	60 minutes to 2 hours
Day 3	4 hours
Day 4	6 hours
Day 5	8 hours
Day 6	Full time wear

Your Orthotist will advise you if you need to have a different weaning regime to the above and discuss whether your AFO will be for long-term or short-term use. They will advise as to whether a follow up 'review' appointment is required after the fitting.

## **Footwear**

Finding footwear to accommodate your AFO is particularly important. Here are some characteristics of footwear that work best over an AFO:

- Wide fitting.
- Lace up or Velcro as these are most adjustable.
- Low opening.
- An inlay in the shoe that can be removed as this provides more depth to accommodate the AFO.
- Firm sole with a heel height of 1 to 1.5cm maximum.

For these reasons, a trainer or walking shoe are usually ideal.

## **Care and cleaning of the AFO**

Your AFO should be cleaned with a damp cloth and air dried before putting it back on. Excessive heat can distort the shape. Any fluff or hair can be picked out of the Velcro straps to prolong their life.

Padding and straps will wear over time, you can contact the Orthotics Department for a repair. This might be able to be done 'while you wait' or you might need to leave the AFO with the technicians, depending on the amount of work required.

## **When to contact the department**

Please contact the orthotic department if:

- There are any rubs or redness on the skin that do not disappear within 30 minutes.
- If the AFO is outgrown.
- There are any signs of wear on the AFO – straps and padding worn, white stress marks on the plastic usually around the ankle or footplate.

## **Commonly asked questions**

### **What if I lose or gain weight?**

Small changes in weight should not affect the function of the AFO. However, if you are finding that the AFO is not as effective then please contact the department.

### **Can I drive with my AFO on?**

Yes, you can drive with your AFO, but please contact your insurance provider to let them know. You may prefer to remove it whilst driving and then put it on once you have reached your destination.

### **Will I always need to wear an AFO?**

It depends on your medical condition and rehabilitation as there is no set time for how long you may need an AFO for. Some people need an AFO for a short period of time and others will need it long term.

### **How often do I need to wear it?**

An AFO only has an effect on your foot and ankle for as long as you are wearing it. Therefore, when you are not wearing it you are not supported, which may lead to trips or falls.

**Please remember to bring your AFO to any follow-up appointments.**

Your Orthotist is .....

## Contact details

### Orthotics Department

Tebbit Centre  
Nuffield Orthopaedic Centre  
Windmill Road  
Oxford  
OX3 7HE

Call us using the following telephone numbers:

01865 227 570

01865 227 575

01865 227 707

01865 227 760

01865 227 604

Telephones will be answered from 8.30am to 3.00pm.

E-mail: [\*\*orthotics.department@ouh.nhs.uk\*\*](mailto:orthotics.department@ouh.nhs.uk)

Website: [\*\*www.ouh.nhs.uk/orthotics\*\*](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/orthotics)



## Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Author: Emily Neville  
August 2025  
Review: August 2028  
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
[www.ouh.nhs.uk/information](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/information)



*Making a difference across our hospitals*

[charity@ouh.nhs.uk](mailto:charity@ouh.nhs.uk) | 01865 743 444 | [hospitalcharity.co.uk](http://hospitalcharity.co.uk)

OXFORD HOSPITALS CHARITY (REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1175809)

