



## Orthotics

### Fact Sheet

Also known as **orthoses**, **insoles** and **shoe inserts**, orthotics are purposeful medical devices that work to alter the biomechanical functioning of the feet and legs (meaning how the bones, joints, muscles and tissues work together) to produce the desired result as determined by the Podiatrist. Usually, this result is centred around relieving pain, improving comfort, and facilitating healing following injury. Orthotics can also be used to improve sporting performance, reduce muscular fatigue and encourage healthy development in children - among other results.

All registered Podiatrists undergo years of training in both assessing, diagnosing, and treating injuries and conditions affecting the lower limbs, as well as in results-driven orthotic prescription.

#### What problems can orthotics help with?

Orthotics can help with numerous problems and injuries associated with the feet and legs. These include, among many others:

- Plantar fasciitis (heel pain)
- Achilles tendinopathy (pain at the back of the heel)
- Metatarsalgia (forefoot pain)
- Morton's neuroma
- Ankle sprains
- Managing arthritic pain
- Supporting flat feet
- Stress fractures
- Sever's disease (growing pains in kids)

- Shin splints (medial tibial stress syndrome)
- Patellofemoral knee pain
- In-toeing in kids

#### What types of orthotics are there?

While there are many brands of orthotics and many Podiatrists may choose to make their own, there are two primary **types** of orthotics that Podiatrists will prescribe: custom orthotics and prefabricated orthotics.

##### Custom orthotics

Custom orthotics are specifically made for a patient using an **impression of their feet**, which can currently be taken using a plaster cast, a foam box impression or a 3D scan. This impression is combined with the patient's biomechanical assessment findings and best-care principles to create unique orthotics that are precise to the millimetre and are carefully designed to work for their feet alone.

These orthotics are typically made with materials that will have a longer lifespan than prefabricated orthotics (below). Custom orthotics can often move easily from shoe to shoe, as long as the shoes can accommodate orthotics and there aren't substantial differences between the shoes (e.g. different sizes). Orthotics work while you're wearing them, so patients are encouraged to wear their orthotics as much as possible to receive the maximum benefit - particularly if they're just starting to recover from injury.

Depending on the problem and type of orthotic designed, they may also be able to help reduce the risk of future injury or re-injury. When getting custom orthotics, your Podiatrist will discuss with you the specific function of your orthotics and how they will work to improve your foot health.

##### Prefabricated orthotics

Like custom orthotics, prefabricated orthotics are created with a purpose and function specific to the patient and

the problem they're experiencing. Unlike custom orthotics, however, prefabricated orthoses don't capture the patient's unique foot impression. Instead, they use a standard shape and size as a base and specific features are added to the orthotics so they can achieve the desired function.

Prefabricated orthotics are usually created from softer (though not necessarily 'soft' by any means) materials compared to custom orthotics, and hence have a shorter lifespan. This makes them a great diagnostic tool to assess a patient's response to orthotics before they're ready to have custom orthotics designed.

*Disclaimer: This document is an informative guide only and is not a tool for diagnosis or a replacement for a consultation with a Podiatrist. If you think you have developed a Morton's Neuroma or are experiencing any pain or problems with your feet, we recommend that you see your Podiatrist for an accurate diagnosis and an appropriate management plan. Referrals are not required to see a Podiatrist.*