

Information for patients

# Knee Ankle Foot Orthoses



**Orthotics**  
RJAH

## Knee Ankle Foot Orthoses (KAFOs)

KAFOs are prescribed for a number of reasons, these include:

- To realign some or all of the joints in your lower limb
- To provide support to weakened or weakening joints
- To prevent movement which is unhelpful or painful
- To provide protection

Your KAFO is designed to provide support and comfort, and improve your walking pattern. It is prescribed and manufactured for your specific needs. Most KAFOs are made of polypropylene plastic. They are divided into two sections. One is on your lower leg passing along the back of your calf, around your ankle and under your foot and the other is around your thigh. These are connected by metal sides either side of your leg with joints at the knee.

Alternatively the KAFO may be made of leather and metal. There will be a leather band around the top of your calf and one around your thigh. Again these are connected by metal sides either side of your leg with joints at the knee. The sides will be attached into sockets in your shoe. The KAFO is held on by hook and loop fastening straps and is close fitting to ensure control.

## Wearing your KAFO

You need to give yourself time to get used to your KAFO. Build up the amount of time you wear it each day until it is comfortable. Once it has been broken in you should aim to wear it as much as possible to ensure control and support.

## Caution!

It is normal for there to be some red marking of the skin when you take off your KAFO, usually where the straps have been fastened but this should disappear within half an hour or so. It is also normal to build up a little hard skin, especially on the foot. So long as this is not excessive it is nothing to worry about. It is especially important to check your skin regularly if you have altered sensation. If there are persistent red marks or blistering, discontinue wearing your KAFO until you have contacted the department for advice.

## Fitting

When putting on a plastic KAFO ensure your heel is right to the back and bottom of the calf section. The straps should be pulled snug to ensure the device does not move around, but not so tight that they are uncomfortable. The knee joints should be roughly level with the middle of your knee cap.

## Footwear

Your KAFO should always be worn in a shoe, ensure it is sat at the back of your footwear when putting it on. If you have a leather and metal KAFO it is usually easiest to leave it connected into your shoe and put both on at the same time. Your KAFO should preferably be worn in footwear with a fastening, i.e. lace or hook and loop fastening straps. This will improve control by helping hold your foot onto the orthosis. The lower down the tongue of the shoe the easier it will be to put over the calf section. Most footwear has removable inlays; these can be taken out and replaced with your KAFO should you need extra depth and room to accommodate the device.

Take your KAFO with you when you are buying new shoes. If your KAFO will not fit into your shoes you may need to choose a half or a whole size bigger. Footwear should not have a heel more than approximately two and a half centimetres (one inch).

## Care

Please keep your KAFO well maintained:

- You can clean it with a damp cloth and towel dry
- Keep it away from direct heat
- Keep it away from pets
- If the hook and loop fastening straps, knee joints or lining of your orthosis become worn drop it into the Orthotic department for repair
- Please do not try to adapt the orthosis yourself
- Your KAFO has been prescribed for you and shouldn't be given to anyone else as this could cause them problems
- Your KAFO needs to be checked every six months to ensure it is in good working order

You will be contacted each 6 months to request your KAFO is dropped into the Orthotics Department for the routine checks to be conducted.

Should you have any queries regarding your KAFO please do not hesitate to contact us on **01691 404442**. We provide the clinical service for orthotics at The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital, Oswestry, The Royal Shrewsbury Hospital and The Princess Royal Hospital, Telford. Please find the relevant contact details below. Please only contact the department where you are due to have an appointment or have already been seen, other sites will not be able to deal with your enquiry and you will be asked to ring the appropriate hospital.

### **The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital / Tel: 01691 404442**

Below are the opening times for the department for dropping off/collecting footwear and appliances. Please note the contact telephone number is available throughout normal working hours.

#### **RECEPTION OPENING TIMES**

Monday – Thursday, 8.15 am – 5.45 pm

Friday, 8.15 am – 4.45 pm

#### **GENERAL ENQUIRIES**

Monday – Thursday, 8.45 am – 5 pm

Friday, 8.45 am – 4 pm

CLOSED FOR LUNCH 12.30 pm – 1.15 pm

### **The Royal Shrewsbury Hospital / Tel: 01743 261000 Ext: 3701**

Monday – Thursday, 8.30 am – 4 pm

Friday, 8.30 am – 3 pm

CLOSED FOR LUNCH 12.30 pm – 1.15 pm

### **The Princess Royal Hospital / Tel: 01952 641222 Ext: 4224**

Monday – Thursday, 9 am – 4.30 pm

Friday, 8.30 am – 12.30 pm. Closed pm

CLOSED FOR LUNCH 12.30 pm – 1.15 pm

Please note we are only able to offer appointments at the site you have been referred to by your consultant/G.P. even if this isn't the most local to your home address.

## If you require a special edition of this leaflet

This leaflet is available in large print. Arrangements can also be made on request for it to be explained in your preferred language. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) email: [rjah.pals.office@nhs.net](mailto:rjah.pals.office@nhs.net)

## Feedback

Tell us what you think of our patient information leaflet.  
Please send your comments to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) email: [rjah.pals.office@nhs.net](mailto:rjah.pals.office@nhs.net)

Your KAFO requires regular maintenance checks and it is recommended that it is submitted every \_\_\_\_\_ months from the date of supply \_\_\_\_\_ for service checks via the Orthotics department.

These checks will ensure all components are functioning and wearing correctly and are important in the maintenance of the device. Once submitted for its service with your KAFO will be sent to have the required checks carried out, these checks may take up to 3–4 weeks depending on the work required and you will be informed when the brace is ready to be collected.

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