

Orthotics

Orthotics, also known as *orthoses*, refers to any device inserted into a shoe, ranging from felt pads to custom-made shoe inserts that correct an abnormal or irregular, walking pattern. Sometimes called *arch supports*, orthotics allow people to stand, walk, and run more efficiently and comfortably. While over-the-counter orthotic are available and may help people with mild symptoms, they normally cannot correct the wide range of symptoms that prescription foot orthoses can since they are not custom made to fit an individual's unique foot structure.

Orthotic devices come in many shapes, sizes, and materials and fall into three main categories: those designed to change foot function, those that are primarily protective in nature, and those that combine functional control and protection.

Rigid Orthotics

Rigid orthotic devices are designed to control function and are used primarily for walking or dress shoes. They are often composed of a firm material, such as plastic or carbon fiber. Rigid orthotics are made from a mold after a podiatrist takes a plaster cast or other kind of image of the foot. Rigid orthotics control motion in the two major foot joints that lie directly below the ankle joint and may improve or eliminate strains, aches, and pains in the legs, thighs, and lower back.

Soft Orthotics

Soft orthotics are generally used to absorb shock, increase balance, and take pressure off uncomfortable or sore spots. They are usually effective for diabetic, arthritic, and deformed feet. Soft orthotics are typically made up of soft, cushioned materials so that they can be worn against the sole of the foot, extending from the heel past the ball of the foot, including the toes. Like rigid orthotics, soft orthotics are also made from a mold after a podiatrist takes a plaster cast or other kind of image of the foot.

Semi-Rigid Orthotics

Semi-rigid orthotics provide foot balance for walking or participating in sports. The typical semi-

rigid orthotic is made up of layers of soft material, reinforced with more rigid materials. Semi-rigid orthotics are often prescribed for children to treat flatfoot and *in-toeing* or *out-toeing* disorders. These orthotics are also used to help athletes mitigate pain while they train and compete.

Digital Scanning for Orthotics

Another service we are able to offer is digital scanning for orthotics. Like the video above and to the right shows, with the Tom-Cat Digital scanner we are able to create a three-dimensional image of your foot. This means that we are able to make more accurate orthotics than ever before. Do not be deceived by the "custom fit" orthotics made available in retail stores. Their scans only show how your weight is distributed based on a pressure scan. Then an off-the-shelf, pre-fabricated orthotic is recommended to you based on the type of pressure distribution the scan reveals. Our scan makes a three-dimensional map of your feet and allows us to fabricate an orthotic device unique to your feet and foot care needs, including marking trouble spots for padding and other accommodations. This process also allows us to save time both in the office and in ordering your orthotics, meaning you will be getting your orthotics sooner and with greater convenience, and that you will be able to find relief from heel and foot pain sooner.