

## ***What is an orthotic?***

An orthotic device for feet is a device worn in your shoes to help support and stabilise your feet. There are many materials and types of orthotic devices available ranging from generic to prescription and hard to soft materials.

Willunga Podiatry prescribes orthotics by first taking an hour at least to assess your biomechanics, discuss your needs with you and discuss various options. You will always be sent home with stretching and or strengthening exercises to do regardless of orthotic therapy or footwear modifications.

Common materials used are:

- Carbon Fibre – Long lasting, easy to fit in shoes, hold their shape through the manufacturing process, adjustable
- High Density foam – varies from firm to soft, can often fit in sandals more easily, more accommodating for bony prominences.
- Generic – vary from firm plastic to hard or soft foam.
- Anything – Balanced Podiatry will search for the ideal device material and features for you.

## ***Will I need to buy new shoes?***

While the shoe generally needs to be wide and deep enough to accommodate an orthotic, that doesn't mean you will always need to go out and buy new shoes.

Generally if the insole can be removed and there is a strap or laces to hold the shoes on an orthotic can be fitted.

If none of your current shoes are suitable for orthotics, we will sometimes suggest trying the better shoes before going ahead with an orthotic, sometimes more cushioning and support in a shoe resolves a foot condition without an orthotic.

It's important to be honest about your shoes and issues you may have with replacing shoes or certain requirements for work or dress code so that your podiatrist can help guide you in the best treatment for your condition as well as finances and practicalities. Orthotic therapy can only work with shoes, and making sure your shoes are suitable for you is one of the first steps in treating foot pain.

## ***So what about Summer?***

Generally if orthotics are required you will not be able to go all summer in flip-flops or barefoot. Many sandals now come with a removable foot bed to accommodate an orthotic. Some sandals provide good support features or can be adjusted by a shoe maker to reflect the shape of your orthotics

Remember that generally thongs and sandals are not very supportive and if you have an issue that requires orthotics to be prescribed, its worth making the effort to wear them all wear round to avoid the condition returning or worsening.

### ***How do I know I need orthotics?***

A podiatrist is a good place to start, but other people involved in your care including Physiotherapists, Chiropractors or your GP may indicate that its worth having your feet checked.

It is important to let everyone involved in your care who else you are seeing so that they can collaborate to obtain the best outcomes for you.

Our feet are really marvels of engineering – there are 26bones which make up many joints that allow the foot to absorb shock, adapt to various terrain and provide a rigid lever to propel our bodies while also providing a stable platform to support our bodies.

Sometimes the foot can become dysfunctional – injuries, overuse and hard artificial surfaces can overload the structures of the feet and create pain. It is at this time that footwear or orthotics can be used to help stabilise the foot. Sometimes people also have other conditions or reasons for requiring intervention by shoes and/or orthotics.

Some common conditions that can be helped with orthotic therapy include:

Arthritis

Sports injury

Muscle injury

Bunions or other joint deformities

Knee pain, hip pain, back pain

### ***Are they comfortable?***

Yes. Many people run and play sport in their orthotics or wear them standing at work all day. Generally there will be a period of acclimatisation, much in the same way that a new pair of shoes or a new watch or glasses takes a while to get used to.

We take a weight bearing cast to obtain the best possible impression of your feet. Measurements of your feet are taken and a prescription is written specific to you and your requirements. A workshop in Adelaide then hand-crafts the devices following the prescription provided.

Generic orthotics are sourced depending on the shape of the foot and features required and some modifications can be made to tailor devices to individual needs

When dispensed the fit is checked, any necessary adjustments made and you are advised to wear them in gradually.

A review is usually conducted in a month to make sure things are working well for you and if not, adjustments can be made or further treatment options provided.

Often tight muscles can guard and it can take a while for them to relax onto your orthotics. Self massage with a tennis ball or rolling pin can help relieve this discomfort. Stretches may also be prescribed. Willunga Podiatry uses mobilisation and manipulation techniques and needling therapies to supplement most orthotic therapy.

### ***Are they expensive?***

There are a range of treatment options available for any budget. At Willunga Podiatry orthotic options range from \$70 to \$450 (appointment fees not included). As children are growing and changing a 20% discount is offered to those under 18 years of age. This includes orthotics and appointments.