



**Orthotic & Prosthetic**  
SPECIALTIES INC.

## **LEATHER AFO**

### **General Wear and Care Instructions for the Leather AFO**

Here are some tips to serve as a reminder and a reference to support the initial fitting and care instructions you received from your healthcare professional at the time of your final fitting.

The Leather AFO must be worn with a shoe since it is ineffective without one. First, either lace or strap the orthosis on your leg and then put on the shoe, using a shoe horn if necessary. Always wear a sock, stocking, or similar garment under the orthosis to reduce friction and protect from perspiration. Remember to keep the sock wrinkle free without placing excess pressure on the toes. The use of talcum powder and changing the sock promptly after perspiration buildup will also keep you more comfortable. Natural fiber socks, such as cotton, allow better air circulation and absorption of perspiration.

It's important to maintain the same shoe heel height for which your orthosis was designed. Excessive height strains your knees and back creating instability. Heels that are too low may also cause knee and back pain. As we have explained, shoes worn with an orthosis should provide sufficient support. Slippers, sandals and loafers may be inappropriate, depending on your foot and ankle condition.

Patients wearing the Leather AFO should check regularly for signs of skin pressure and irregular shoe wear, reporting with them to the office of the healthcare professional.

### **SELF-EXAMINATION**

Your Leather AFO was made to fit you properly and provide the greatest degree of comfort. Like breaking in a new pair of shoes, it may take a brief period before the orthosis feels natural. Follow the instructions of your healthcare professional regarding the length of time to wear the device as you build-up your tolerance.

A properly fitting orthosis exerts a firm, steady pressure, similar to an open-palm hand pushing against the skin. It should not cause any sharp, stabbing pain or create bruises, calluses or blisters. Should this occur, call your healthcare professional immediately and arrange an appointment for an adjustment.

Occasionally, extended periods of standing and hot or humid weather may result in some swelling. Remove the orthosis and elevate your leg until the swelling subsides. If it persists or becomes painful, notify your healthcare professional at once.

It is also important to maintain a relatively consistent weight. Your orthosis was custom designed for your weight and dimensions; extreme gain or loss may cause improper fit. You will need to visit your healthcare professional if this should occur. Growing youngsters should be monitored at regular intervals to maintain proper fit.

Daily examination of the skin that contacts the orthosis should become a habit. A new orthosis may cause some redness, which should disappear within 15 minutes after removing the device. If the redness does not disappear, make an appointment to have this checked.

People with diabetes, vascular insufficiency or neuropathy are especially vulnerable to skin irritation, particularly in bony areas including the bottoms of feet. Extra care should be taken and even minor skin irritations should be treated promptly.

### PROPER HYGIENE

It makes sense to keep both your orthosis and yourself as clean as possible. Any skin covered by the orthosis should be washed daily with warm water and mild soap. Generous rinsing ensures removal of all lather since dried soap irritates the skin. Thoroughly clean the bottoms of your feet and between the toes to avoid bacteria and dirt collections. The skin should be completely dry before wearing the orthosis. Shaving your legs may cause an itchy rash or skin irritation.

Your Leather AFO should be cleaned regularly with a solution of ½ alcohol and ½ water using a clean cotton towel. Do not attempt to hasten drying by using a hair dryer or placing the appliance in front of a heater. Your orthosis may be towel-dried or left to dry at room temperature. Use a quality shoe cleaner and conditioner on the outside of the orthosis. Talcum powder may help prevent odors.

If any part of your orthosis becomes cracked or broken, make an appointment to have it repaired. Worn leather portions should also be repaired. If further assistance is needed, contact your provider.