

Patient information

Orthotic Services: guidance for patients on provision

The following guidance explains the service available with regards to orthotic appliances through the West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust.

Referrals to the Orthotic Service

Referrals to the orthotic can only be made by doctors or consultants who work at the hospital. GPs are unable to refer into this service. See overleaf for further details on entitlements after initial consultation.

What is the Orthotics Department?

An orthotic device (or 'appliance') is externally fitted to support any part of the body that is weakened by defect, disease or injury, to correct, maintain or even restrict functions.

When you attend for your orthotic appointment you will see either an orthotist or appliance officer depending on the decision of the referring doctor or consultant.

An appliance officer will fit an 'off the shelf' (stock) or a 'semi-custom' appliance when that is appropriate.

An orthotist can prescribe stock appliances but can also carry out a full evaluation of your needs and take any measurements required to provide a suitable 'made to measure' appliance when that is appropriate.

You may be supplied with your appliance on the day or you may be asked to return for a further appointment where you will be fitted, depending upon your particular needs.

What types of appliance might I be supplied with?

- Specialist prescription footwear
- Footwear / footwear adaptations, including insoles, heel raises, etc
- Ankle foot orthoses (AFOs); knee foot orthoses (KFOs)
- Compression and specialist support hosiery
- Spinal corsets / braces and abdominal supports
- Protective helmets
- Wigs (while a non-orthotic service, wig orders are processed by the appliance officers).

What is my entitlement?

In most cases we will be able to meet your health needs with an 'off the shelf' (stock) appliance. Made to measure (bespoke) appliances will only be provided when there is clinical necessity as determined by the doctor and the orthotist. Modern off the shelf appliances are effective for the majority of patients.

Footwear

- **Shoes:** You are entitled to two pairs of shoes. Replacements will only be provided if the shoes are condemned by the appliance officer. There is no specified limit on repairs which are undertaken on a case by case basis as decided by the orthotist or appliance officer. Children will be supplied initially with one pair of footwear however new shoes are provided when their shoes size alters or are worn out beyond repair (as assessed by the orthotist or appliance officer). We ask that you do not throw away your shoes or boots if you have any problems, but contact the department. Should patients wish to pay for supplementary shoes above entitlement, the appliance officers can provide further information.
- **Shoe Raises:** You are entitled to three initial alterations/modifications. Children are entitled to two pairs of shoes to be adapted or raised. Replacement rises will be provided when the riser no longer provides the necessary level of support. To

arrange replacement, the patient must bring the shoe to the appliance officer. Please provide us with cleaned shoes or they may be refused by the appliance officer. Non-adapted shoe repairs and maintenance are your own responsibility, ie if you have adaptations done to your left shoe it will be your responsibility to repair your right shoe.

- **Insoles:** You are entitled to two pairs. A pair of insoles will typically last up to one year, depending on use. When they are no longer providing the necessary support, please contact the department regarding a replacement pair. Replacements are provided on a one for one basis and so the old insoles must be returned before replacements are issued. Lost insoles will incur a replacement charge.

Additional provision

Patients who feel they need more than the specified number of devices may request additional provision. Routinely, such additional provision will have to be paid for by the patient, unless there is a clear justification otherwise (eg very heavy work related usage).

Splint appliances

This section of guidelines is for the provision of care of adult patients. Paediatric patients will be reviewed on a case by case basis between the orthotist and the paediatric department.

In general, patients requiring orthotic management will be supplied with one orthotic device. There are some areas where a second device is required, eg corsetry. However, this will be assessed by the orthotist or appliance officer and provided on the basis of clinical need.

It is the patient's responsibility to routinely check the appliance for signs of wear and to then immediately contact the orthotic department for review and maintenance. Should a lower limb appliance with commercially manufactured parts (eg KAFO knee joints, AFO ankle joints) require adjustment or repair, this should be brought to the attention of the appliance officer who will then inspect the appliance and determine the appropriate course of action.

Fabric support (corset), surgical stockings, truss, collar, wrist brace

Patients will be supplied with up to two devices (or pairs of stockings) initially, depending on the nature of the device. If the patient is happy with the device and there is a clinical need, then further devices may be supplied after six weeks. This will require a follow up appointment with the appliance officer and inspection of the original device(s). Some of these items are subject to a prescription charge.

Collection guidance

You will be expected to collect your appliance(s) from the orthotic department within normal office hours Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm. Goods will only be posted to a patient if there are extenuating circumstances which would prevent patient collection of orthotic goods. If the orthotist feels that an appointment is required to further assess the fit of a device they will not offer the option of collection as this will take place in combination with the appointment.

Follow up appointments

You are entitled to a follow up appointment, up to three months after your fitting (or collection of device) to ensure the device is providing the necessary support and functionality. This appointment is made directly by the patient with the orthotic department. You will be seen by either the orthotist or appliance officer depending on the complexity of your needs. After this follow up the patient will be formally discharged and the referring doctor/consultant informed of the outcome.

Should further appointments on medical grounds be required (ie a change to the patient's condition) then a new GP referral will be required to the hospital doctor/consultant.

Should a further appointment be required to make a repair or adjustment to a device this can be made directly with the Appliance Officer, noting the limitations on entitlement described previously.

Patients who do not attend their appointments

A patient who "Does Not Attend" (DNA) their appointment reduces our ability to offer an efficient service to our patients at the West Suffolk Hospital. If a patient fails to attend an appointment twice, the referring consultant will be informed before any further appointments are made.

Prescription charges

Please be aware that statutory prescriptions do apply for some products and therefore these are not free of charge. In most cases, the products which have a statutory prescription are wigs, abdominal supports, compression hosiery and corsets.

Reviews

The need for a patient review will be determined by the orthotist or appliance officer. Where there is increased risk associated with the appliance or condition, a review appointment will be considered necessary.

Patients using any appliance with commercially manufactured parts, e.g. KAFO knee devices, AFO ankle devices, who have any concerns regarding the appliance should bring their concerns to the attention the Appliance Officer, who will then inspect and recommend accordingly for signs of wear, tear and integrity.

Contact details

In the first instance, all queries on entitlement, prescription charges and processes should be directed to the:

Appliance Officer on 01284 713501

General advice can be found on the hospital website: www.wsh.nhs.uk

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo) <https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>

