

Orthotic Management of the Diabetic Foot

For diabetic patients, it is important to take care of your feet, do not walk barefoot (you may not feel if you step on something sharp), do daily inspections looking for signs of cuts or sores, wear seam free breathable socks, and wear appropriate footwear with a well-fitting custom made orthotic to protect and offload the feet. Most do not realise 70% of diabetes related amputations could have been prevented.

Orthotic treatment is critical to preventing and treating ulcers and charcot foot deformities that often lead to amputation. Due to the reduced blood flow to the feet, diabetic individuals are at a higher risk for ulcer-type wounds, foot deformities and lower extremity amputation that are common due to compromised circulation, and often poor foot position.

When it comes to orthotic management, there are many biomechanical goals the Certified Orthotist, a specialist in full body orthotic design and fabrication, must consider when working with a diabetic foot. Prevention or offloading of pressure ulcers is the first line of defence for the diabetic patient, and that begins with the correct

fitting of diabetic friendly footwear. Generally, these have a sturdy sole construction with appropriate depth and width at the toe box, with a smooth seamless interior.

A custom made, total-contact foot orthosis is a necessary approach when combined with diabetic-friendly footwear. It is important for the Certified Orthotist to perform an in-depth biomechanical assessment, gait analysis, and to pay close attention to the foot/foot orthotic interface to ensure that high pressures are avoided or offloaded, and a more equal foot pressure distribution is achieved. Softer materials are often chosen to assist with shock absorption and biomechanical alignment is maintained so that mid-foot joints are not deformed under load, thus minimizing risks of charcot foot deformities and amputation due to ulceration. Together the foot-orthosis-footwear combination is an excellent preventative protocol for any diabetic individual.

Jacklyn Watkinson-Sullivan CPO (c)

*Certified Prosthetist/Orthotist,
Action Orthotics & Prosthetics*



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