

Orthotists Name:

## Knee Ankle Foot Orthosis

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### Information for patients



## General information

The term KAFO is an abbreviation that stands for **Knee Ankle Foot Orthosis** and describes the part of the body that the brace covers. A KAFO controls the range of motion in your foot, ankle and knee and helps to stabilise your limb. Good foot, ankle and knee alignment is vital for balancing and distributing weight when you are standing and walking.

The KAFO will be designed to meet your specific needs. As each person is unique, so is his or her response to treatment. As you adjust to this new and proper alignment, you may experience some discomfort. The adjustment period usually ranges from one to six weeks when the recommended wearing guidelines are followed.

Your KAFO will either be made of thermoplastic (contemporary) or metal/leather (conventional), and your Orthotist will have discussed what design is best for your need.

## Wearing

Your KAFO has been prescribed for you and is intended for your use only. Your KAFO is designed to conform to the shape of your foot, ankle and knee and may feel slightly 'strange' due to the realignment of your lower limb, and different pressures. It will therefore require a gentle breaking-in period.

## Wear time

When you are first fitted with your KAFO you should aim wear into it gradually.

- Start slowly, only wearing your KAFO for a maximum of one hour on the first day, with low to moderate activities.
- Increase the wearing time each day, by 30 minutes to one hour, until you are comfortable wearing your KAFO all day.
- You should increase your activity level while you are getting used to your KAFO
- If you experience any pain or discomfort, remove the KAFO from your leg for at least two to four hours, and then try again. If pain persists, stop wearing the KAFO and contact your Orthotist.
- Over the long term you will get the most benefit if you wear your KAFO every day

This allows you to get used to wearing the KAFO and let the skin gradually build up resistance to the pressures which are being applied. You should check your skin regularly during the first few weeks. You may experience some general muscle aches until you are used to wearing the KAFO.

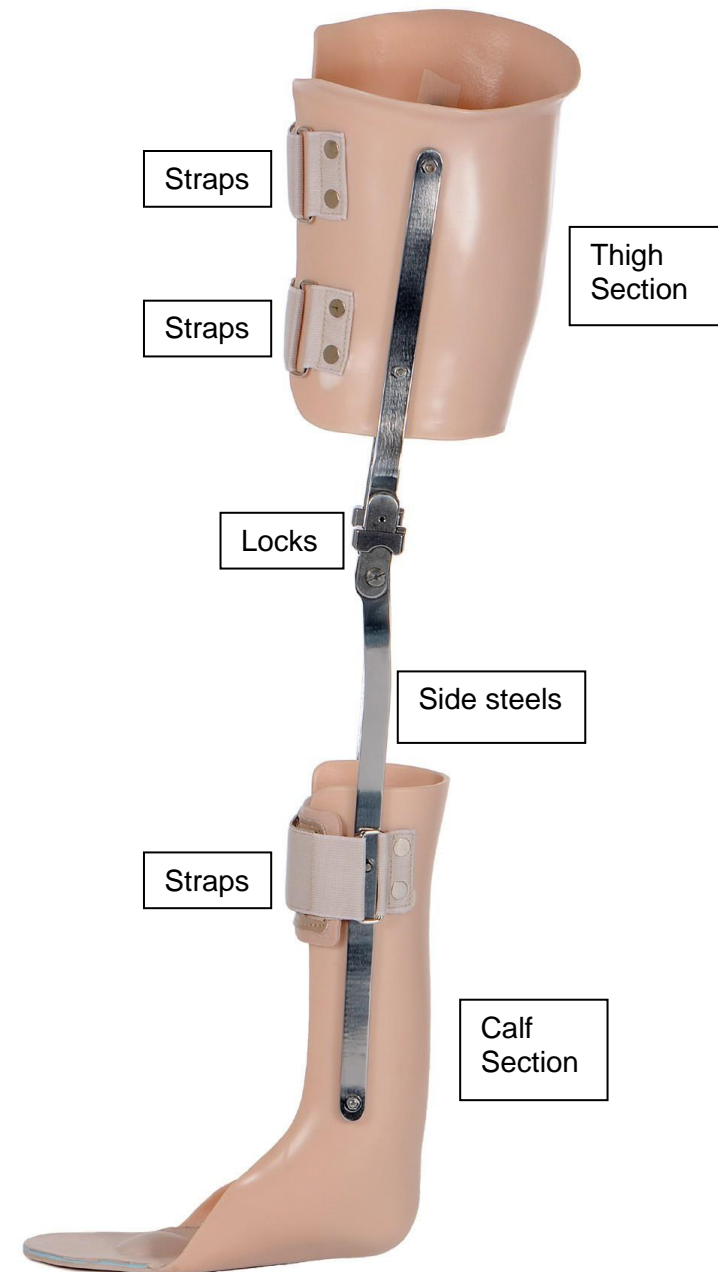
You will generally only be required to wear your KAFO when you are walking. However there may be exceptions to this. These instructions will be given to you when your KAFO is fitted.

## Shoes

- Select good shoes with proper support and always try them on with your KAFO in place to ensure proper fit and comfort.
- The best type of shoes to wear with your KAFO feature a closed back and toe; come up over the top of the foot with some type of fastening e.g laces/velcro as this provides some adjustability; flat shoes; a removable liner; and a slightly wider width to accommodate the KAFO.
- Depending on the type of KAFO (contemporary/ conventional) you have been prescribed, you may need an adaptation to your footwear to fit the KAFO. e.g. heel socket. If you are in any doubt about the type of footwear, your Orthotist will be able to advise you.
- Be sure to wear stockings or long cotton socks (which are a little higher than the top of the KAFO) to minimise the possibility of skin irritation. This will allow a passage of air between your skin and the KAFO and reduce sweat.
- During use, ensure that footwear is fastened as tightly as is comfortable.

## Skin care

You need to check your skin regularly, especially in the first few weeks after you have been fitted with a new KAFO. A close fitting orthosis can sometimes cause some redness on the skin around the edges of the orthosis and where the KAFO is applying corrective pressures. You will need to make sure you keep your skin in good condition. i.e moisturising after shower/bathing. Check your skin thoroughly, especially over bony areas and around the edges of the KAFO. If you see a red area that does not go away within 30 minutes of removing the KAFO, or notice a break in the skin or blisters, you should stop wearing the KAFO and make an appointment with your Orthotist to have it adjusted.



## **Caring for your KAFO**

### **Cleaning**

Use an antibacterial soap and warm water to wipe the inside plastic surfaces of your KAFO. Towel dry the KAFO completely before putting it back on. Avoid drying in direct sources of heat (such as on the heater or using a hair dryer) as this can deform the plastic.

If you have a conventional type KAFO, do not use water as this will cause the leather to rot. Please sprinkle a small amount of talcum powder over the leather to keep it in good condition.

### **Straps and Padding**

The straps and padding may become worn and can be replaced. To

arrange repairs please contact your Orthotic department.

### **Plastic**

Inspect the plastic regularly, checking for any cracks or areas of fatigue. Never attempt to repair, trim or adjust the KAFO yourself. If a problem arises contact your Orthotics department immediately.

### **Joints**

All KAFOs will have a knee joint to allow your knee to bend when sitting. These may also allow your knee to bend when walking. You must always check your KAFO before each use, looking for any cracks and to make sure that all rivets and screws are secure.

## Locks

Your KAFO may be fitted with locks that keep your knee straight when walking. These can take the form of ring or lever locks and your Orthotist will be able to tell you which type you have and the reason for this. These locks must be in place before you start walking and can be operated in three different ways.

- Gravity - they will fall down and stop the joint from bending - least common
- Manual - you have to physically lock them in place
- Automatic - they will lock automatically when you stand.

To unlock them you will have to release them by hand or using a cable release system. Your Orthotist will show you the easiest way and how to do this safely.



## Important

***If you discover that your KAFO is broken or the locks/joints are not functioning properly, you must contact the Orthotic Department immediately.***

## Review

Following fitting of your KAFO your Orthotist will arrange an appointment for review. Minor adjustments can be made to your KAFO and we would recommend that your brace is reviewed by an Orthotist every 6 months to ensure the device is still meeting your needs and to check for any wear and tear.

Children will need their KAFO changed more often as they grow or gain weight. We would recommend that their brace is reviewed by your Orthotist at least every 6 months.

Never attempt to repair or adjust your brace yourself. If you are experiencing any problems or have questions regarding your brace, please contact your Orthotist.

If you require an appointment with your orthotic department, and have been seen in the past 2 years, you can contact them direct without a GP referral.

## Remember

**Please remember to bring your KAFO when attending appointments with your Orthotist even if it is broken or no longer fits.**

**For a copy of this booklet in larger print, Braille, or your community language (Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Urdu or Polish), please call 0131 536 9434.**