

Orthoses

- **Orthoses can also be called orthotics, splints, braces or calipers**
- **Orthoses are supportive devices fitted to the body to help keep you stable**
- **They can help with weakness and pain which is common among polio survivors**
- **An orthotist will provide advice and custom-make your orthosis**

Orthoses are often called orthotics, splints, braces or calipers. They are supportive devices fitted to the body. They can help to:

- protect and support a body part
- compensate for changes in muscle length or function
- re-align skeletal joints
- help with pressure
- improve walking pattern

Orthoses can be used on many different parts of the body. Orthoses are made of many types of materials. Orthoses may be custom-made for an individual or pre-fabricated and adjusted for your needs.



A range of different orthoses

Post-Polio: Weakness And Damage To Joints

All polio survivors are different. However, common weakness and damage to joints include:

- weak thigh and calf muscles that stabilise the knee
- weakness in the the foot and ankle muscles leading to:
 - increased risk of falling
 - changed walking patterns
- knee, hip or spine joint damage and pain from thrusting the knee backwards
- damage to joints from locking or rotation through joints
- weakness in the trunk leading to excessive curvature of the spine (e.g. kyphosis and scoliosis)
- weakness through the shoulder or arm that requires bracing to support the joint position

Many of the above are 'compensation' methods. This means doing something to overcome a weakness or pain you may experience. For example, because your left leg is weak, you rely on your right leg.

What Are The Benefits Of Orthoses?

Orthoses may help polio survivors by:

- compensating for weak muscles
- protecting painful joints in order to improve mobility and function
- reducing the likelihood of a trip or fall
- conserving energy by making activities easier

Types Of Orthoses

Some examples of orthoses that polio survivors might use are:

- Hip Knee Ankle Foot Orthosis (HKAFO)
- Knee-Ankle-Foot Orthosis (KAFO)
- Ankle-Foot Orthosis (AFO)
- Ground Reaction Ankle Foot Orthosis (GRAFO)
- Hand/arm splints or other upper arm orthoses
- Spinal brace or other upper body orthoses



Hip Knee Ankle Foot Orthosis (HKAFO)

How Do I Get An Orthosis?

An orthotist specialises in orthoses. They may work alone or within a multidisciplinary team. You may wish to speak to your general practitioner to organise a referral or you can contact an orthotist directly.

Generally, when you visit an orthotist, they will:

- do an assessment
- discuss your options to meet your goals and requirements
- complete the digitisation/measurement/casting process
- oversee the manufacturing or procurement of the orthosis
- help with fitting your orthosis and educate you on how to use it
- organise regular reviews for functional effectiveness and adjustment for fit

Individual Help

- Visit **Polio Australia's Health Professional Register** to find an orthotist experienced with the Late Effects of Polio
- Visit the **Australian Orthotic Prosthetic Association website** to find a Orthotist

The information on this fact sheet was supplied by [Australian Orthotic Prosthetic Association](#).

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