

Orthotics

By Jasen Langley, DPM



AAPP
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
PODIATRIC PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

10 Maple Street, Suite 301
Middleton, MA 01949

978-646-9091

978-646-9092 fax

office@aappm.org

www.aappm.org

Orthotics

By Jasen Langley, DPM

What are orthotics? This is a common question that most podiatric physicians encounter with patients who are in need of orthotics. Patients are skeptical and inquisitive about the device, which is analogous to an arch support. A proper protocol, examination, presentation, and confidence enable physicians to implement orthotics in the majority of their patients. Orthotics are very important in the treatment plan of every patient who has a biomechanical disorder. They can be used as a therapeutic as well as a diagnostic tool. This article will enlighten the podiatric physician with pearls about implementing orthotics in the office setting.

Pearl 1: Treatment protocol: One reason that orthotics are under utilized is that there is no true protocol established in some offices. It seems that some physicians recommend orthotics when other treatments have failed. However, orthotics should be a first tier treatment for most conditions. Establishing a treatment protocol system will allow the patient to benefit from the use of the orthotic device. For instance, after performing a bunionectomy, orthotics should be prescribed to control the pronatory forces that cause the deformity to reoccur. Treatment protocols are essential to increasing the use of orthotics.

Pearl 2: Completing a thorough biomechanical examination: Your biomechanical examination will allow you to become more confident in presenting the patient with a treatment plan that will include orthotics. This examination will enlighten the patient about the biomechanical causal effect of their condition. For instance, in the case of heel pain, the implementation of an orthotic in the treatment will control the medial column from collapsing, thus significantly reducing the stretch of the plantar fascia. This simple example shows a need for the device that patients will understand. Another example is a limb length discrepancy. This condition “sells itself” and I use this cliché because it answers many of the patients’ questions concerning their foot pain. Usually, an appropriate heel lift in an orthotic provides relief. The biomechanical exam is a key component in utilizing an orthotic in your office setting.

Pearl 3: Presentation: Presenting any product is key to compliance in the medical field. In this case, the presentation of an orthotic to a patient is critical. Orthotics are not really a tangible product. In other words, they cannot take it by mouth, so patients have trouble believing that it has “true” medicinal effects. The patients listen to you and to the explanation of the biomechanics and they believe in the physician prescribing the product. If Dr. Feelgood presented an orthotic to Mrs. Blue-eyed, his explanation of the therapeutic value of this insert has to be very compelling. The presentation of the orthotic device must stress the therapeutic value to improve the patients’ biomechanical condition.

Pearl 4: Confidence: “You know more than what you know!!!” Every podiatric physician should remember this statement. One of the problems that most physicians and practices encounter is their lack of belief in an orthotic. In reality, that simple insert can cure a lot of foot ailments. Most of you are probably saying either “yeah right” or “how does an orthotic improve most foot conditions?” The point is that the statement was set in a tone that illustrated confidence and with certainty. If that statement got some people to think, I can now explain how that orthotic can improve your life!! Most physicians use basic biomechanics and this understanding can give the patient an aura of confidence. This allows an ease of acceptance in the implementation of the orthotic device.

These pearls on implementing orthotics in the office are just a small example of what can be utilized in the office. Treatment protocols, biomechanical exams, product presentation, and confidence levels are key factors in patient acceptance of orthotics. Orthotics are great when used in the appropriate biomechanical condition. So, when you finish reading this article, I hope you have gained a new perspective on the subject of orthotics!

Jasen Langley, DPM, AACFAS, AAPWCA. Dr. Langley is an associate at Affiliated Foot and Ankle Center, LLP, Howell, NJ. He is an associate member of American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons, American Professional Wound Care Association, and American Academy of Podiatric Practice Management