North Cheshire and Mersey
NHS Foundation Trust

Your footwear

Orthotics

Information for patients and carers

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Caring for you

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Introduction

Your orthotist has given you specialist footwear because of a clinical need.

This may be due to a medical condition such as diabetes or rheumatoid arthritis. This means you may be at risk of developing foot problems, or you may be unable to buy shoes that fit correctly, even after trying wider or deeper-fitting shoes available on the market.

Your footwear (and insoles) aims to support and protect your feet by:

- distributing pressure evenly
- reducing the risk of skin breakdown
- providing cushioning
- accommodating your foot shape.

You have tried on your new footwear at the hospital. They were checked to ensure the fit is correct and any requested changes have been made.

Wearing your footwear

You should always wear well-fitting socks or stockings with your footwear, which are no wrinkled. This helps to draw away moisture from your skin and reduces friction between your skin and the shoe.

Before putting on your new footwear, always check inside the shoes to make sure they are clear of objects such as stones and sand. The insoles can be removed, so take them out and check underneath.

When putting your shoes on:

- make sure that your heel is secure against the back of your shoe
- fasten the laces or Velcro® straps securely

Getting used to your footwear

It is important to wear in your new footwear and insoles gradually.

Example wearing-in process:

- Day 1 – up to 1 hour
- Day 2 – up to 2 hours
- Day 3 – up to 3 hours
- Day 4 – up to 4 hours
- Day 5 – once you can wear them for 5 hours you can continue wearing them for most of the day.

If needed, repeat a day until the footwear feels comfortable. If you feel discomfort take the shoes off and try again later or start again the next day.

Please note: This is only an example. Wearing-in times vary between individuals. People at higher risk, including those with diabetes, may start with just 15 to 30 minutes per day. Your orthotist will advise if this applies to you.

Checking your feet

You must check your feet regularly, especially when wearing-in your footwear. Look for:

- blisters
- swelling
- warmth
- cuts
- pressure marks that last **more than 20 minutes** after removing your shoes

If you cannot see your feet easily, ask someone else to check them for you. This is especially important if you have diabetes or reduced sensation in your feet.

Stop wearing them and contact the Orthotics Department immediately for a review if you:

- notice any changes that concern you
- are unable to wear in the footwear

Care instructions

It is your responsibility to keep your footwear in good condition.

If the insoles become dirty, wipe them with a damp cloth or disinfectant wipe. Allow them to air-dry fully before wearing them again.

Cleaning your footwear depends on the type of material they are made from:

- **Leather** – clean with a damp cloth, taking care not to soak the leather. Allow to air-dry, then apply wax or polish to help waterproof the leather and keep it soft.
- **Nubuck or suede** – clean with a damp cloth. Once dry, apply a nubuck or suede spray.
- **Neoprene** – clean with a damp cloth to remove dirt or stains

Reviews, repairs and replacements

The heels and soles of your shoes will wear over time.

To keep your footwear safe and long-lasting, the Orthotics Department will carry out repairs **free of charge**. Please take your footwear to the department, which is located in Kendrick Wing, Warrington Hospital.

The footwear must be:

- labelled with your name and hospital number (or if you do not have this, please include your date of birth or address)
- be dropped off with a note explaining which repairs are needed

Footwear must be clean when brought in for repair. **Heavily soiled footwear will not be accepted and will be returned for cleaning.**

Footwear will be replaced if it cannot be repaired, or if your foot shape has changed. This will be assessed during a review appointment with the orthotist. A new GP or healthcare professional referral will be needed.

The NHS provides **2 pairs of footwear per referral**. You must wear and break in the first pair for several weeks before the second pair is ordered. This will be arranged at a review appointment with your orthotist.

Contact

Please contact the Orthotics Department on 01925 662446 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm) if you:

- have any further foot problems or experience any pain
- need more information
- need this leaflet in another format