



Do I Need Orthotics?

Orthotics are commonly prescribed to help people who have an injury that is caused by abnormal lower limb alignment and/or biomechanics. Abnormal alignment and biomechanics in the lower limb result in increased stress on certain structures of the lower limb, pelvis and spine during weight bearing activity. Overtime, injury can occur to these structures due to repetitive stress or overuse. Examples include tendinopathy, stress fractures and joint wearing.

3 Foot Types

There are 3 main foot types; pronator, supinator (high arches) and neutral. Orthotics generally fall under the pronator or supinator categories. To tell what kind of foot you have, take note of your footprints on the tiles when you step out of the shower.



Pronators

Orthotics are often over-prescribed to pronated feet. The reality is that they are only necessary when the foot structure is contributing to injury, even after attempting a course of conservative (physiotherapy) management. If the lower limb alignment and biomechanics do not alter sufficiently with physiotherapy, then orthotics can be of use. Occasionally orthotics may be indicated as a form of injury prevention in patients with flat feet, especially if they have moderate to severe pronation and are involved in high levels of weight bearing activity, e.g. running.

Supinators

Although less common than pronated feet, people with supinated may also require the use of orthotics due to reduced shock absorption capacity which translates to increased stress on other body structures. Orthotics that offer cushioning can be particularly useful and may also be used as a means to prevent injury among people who also perform high levels of weight bearing activity, e.g. running.

Common Conditions Associated with Abnormal Lower Limb Biomechanics:

- ITB Friction Syndrome
- Patellofemoral Pain Syndrome
- Patella Tendonitis
- Achilles Tendonitis
- Shin splints
- Osteitis Pubis
- Plantar fasciitis

If you are experiencing lower limb or lower back symptoms, especially if you have ongoing issues, it is worthwhile to have an assessment by a physiotherapist to determine whether Orthotics would help reduce your pain and recurrence of injury. Physiotherapists will often tape your feet and assess how you respond to determine whether custom foam Orthotics (made by the physio) or Orthotics made by a podiatrist are of most benefit. Physiotherapists can also provide heel raises that are effective for pain relief in conditions such as plantar fasciitis .