

# ASHEVILLE PODIATRY ASSOCIATES

Doctors Park, Suite 5A  
417 Biltmore Avenue  
Asheville, North Carolina 28801  
Phone 828 - 252 - 9424  
Fax 828 - 251 - 1301

Dr. Douglas Milch

Dr. Debra Wright

## ORTHOTICS

Dorland's Medical Dictionary defines orthotics as "An orthopedic appliance or apparatus used to support, align, prevent, or correct deformities or to improve the function of movable parts of the body."

Orthotics are used to treat a variety of conditions including knee pain, shin splints, iliotibial band syndrome, postural foot and leg fatigue, heel pain, plantar fasciitis, etc.

Orthotics are inserts that go inside the shoes to help control foot motion or to redistribute weight off a sore area. There are many different types of orthotics. I divide them into two categories, over the counter and custom made.

Over the counter (OTC) inserts are based on your shoe size. There are various brands of OTC devices, and the challenge is to find ones that fit the nooks and crannies of your particular foot. They also need to be ones that are effective in treating your foot or leg condition. Examples of OTC inserts include Spenco, Sof Sole, Sol, Dr. Scholls, and Superfeet. Many people do just fine with OTC orthotics.

Custom made orthotics are made individually for each particular person at a medical facility. A biomechanical examination is performed first measuring angles in the feet and legs. A gait evaluation is performed where the practitioner observes how you walk or run. Then impressions of the feet are taken holding the feet in a very specific position. The impressions and a prescription, based on the information from the biomechanical exam, are sent to an orthotics lab where the inserts are fabricated. These orthotics are specific and only fit that person.

Orthotics can be made out of different materials depending on the person's weight, activity, medical condition being treated, and shoe selection. A heavier person requires the orthotics to be made of stronger materials. Some activities dictate more flexible inserts. The type of shoe is important as it houses the orthotic devices.

Orthotics should be comfortable. If they are not comfortable, they need to be adjusted or re-fabricated. Be forewarned, a person can become addicted to their orthotics. Some orthotic wearers won't leave home without them!