AFO Quick Guide: Find Your Fit

Braced Not Broken | American Foot Drop Association
www.footdropassociation.org

This guide is a clear, practical resource for anyone exploring ankle-foot orthoses (AFOs). It explains common brace types, what a proper fit should feel like, and what to know before buying online. It can be shared with doctors, therapists, or orthotists.

Common Types of AFOs

Solid AFO – Maximum support, minimal movement. Best for severe drop foot, weakness, or spasticity. Posterior Leaf Spring (PLS) – Lightweight and flexible, helps clear your toes if you still have good knee control. Articulated or Hinged AFO – Has an ankle joint for controlled motion. Great for stairs and uneven ground. Carbon-Fiber Dynamic AFO – Light and springy with energy return. A good choice for active walkers. Ground-Reaction AFO – Uses ground force to help the knee stay steady. Helpful if the knee tends to buckle. Dorsiflexion-Assist AFO – Built-in assist that lifts your foot when some muscle strength remains. External Shoe-Mounted AFO – Attaches outside your shoe, like TurboMed. Easier on skin and simple to switch between shoes. Night Splint – Worn at rest to keep your ankle stretched and prevent tightness. Not for walking.

How to Know It Fits Right

Your toes clear the ground with each step. Your heel strikes first and does not slap. No red spots or pain after ten minutes of walking. You can take it on and off without struggling. Your knee stays steady, not buckling or hyperextending. It works with shoes you actually wear. Bring them to every fitting.

Quick Tips Before You Buy or Adjust

Bring your brace and shoes to physical therapy so your gait can be checked. Ask your orthotist if strap tension or angles can be adjusted instead of replaced. If your brace hurts or feels wrong, do not push through. Small adjustments matter.

Online Braces (Amazon and others)

You can find AFOs online, but be careful. Many are not custom-fit and can cause sores or poor alignment. Sizes vary by brand and some listings are misleading. Always check return policies. If possible, have a PT or orthotist look at the fit before using it every day. Look for carbon fiber or lightweight composite, adjustable straps, and padding at contact points. Avoid braces that feel sharp, heavy, or stiff right out of the box.

Brands to Know

Allard ToeOFF or BlueROCKER Ottobock WalkOn series TurboMed Xtern (external) Insightful Medical, Ossur, and Kinetic Research

When to Get Help

If your brace is rubbing, sliding, or making your walk worse, return to your orthotist or PT for adjustment. A few millimeters of change in angle or padding can make a major difference.

Print and Share

This guide can be shared with your care team. It is designed to help you ask better questions, avoid unnecessary refits, and walk with more confidence every day.