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FUNCTIONAL ORTHOTICS

To better understand the goals of treatment in using functional orthotics, a few statements are appropriate. First, functional orthotics will not eliminate or correct structural problems, such as bunions or hammertoes. They will often slow or even stop the progression of these problems.

These devices are not arch supports because they allow *dynamic* motion of the foot rather than keeping the foot in a static supinated position. Pronation is allowed in the initial phase of gait, but the device promotes resupination which is essential in normal gait. Because functional orthotics are meant to prevent excessive and inappropriate compensation, these devices are made from negative plaster casts that are taken in a suspension or non-weightbearing fashion. When the orthotics are made from semi-weight bearing or weight-bearing casts, the foot is allowed to compensate and the deformities and inappropriate compensation is captured, rather than the proper position that the foot should take in gait. The take home message is beware of techniques, when a computer is used, that use a weight-bearing technique to capture the mold.

Functional orthotics are extremely long lasting. Materials such as polypropylene, graphite, and EVA are sturdy and should allow for years of comfort. However, although orthotics have been an integral part of the treatment of conditions from heel spurs to neuromas, they are not a panacea for every foot problem. Some problems require other treatment including medication, cortisone injections, physical therapy, or even surgery. Every patient is an individual and every patient responds to treatment in a unique and individual way. Orthotics are not for everybody and unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that they will eliminate the pain you are experiencing. In our efforts to give the devices every chance to work properly, it is our policy to absorb the cost of the initial adjustment to your device.

Overall, orthotics are an excellent part of our practice armamentarium. I hope that they help your foot problem. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions that you may have regarding this mode of treatment.

For more detailed information on orthotics, please view the video link on our website at sanramonvalleypodiatrygroup.com