

# A guide to your Knee Ankle Foot Orthosis (KAFO)



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## What is a KAFO?

A Knee Ankle Foot Orthosis (KAFO) is a leg brace covering the knee, ankle and foot. They usually consist of a thigh brace and an ankle-foot brace attached together with a knee joint or side bars. There are different styles depending on your specific needs – some are made from thermoplastics, others from metal and leather.

## What does a KAFO do?

The purpose of a KAFO is to stabilise or realign the joints, reduce movement, and support weak leg muscles. Some of the common conditions for which KAFOs are prescribed include multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, and spinal cord injury.

## How do you put on a KAFO?

1. Put on cotton socks or tights and ensure there are no creases. They should cover the full surface area between your skin and the device.
2. Sit down and place your leg into the KAFO, ensuring your heel is firmly in position at the back of the foot brace and that the brace is not rotated.
3. Securely fasten all the straps, ensuring they are tight enough to keep your foot from slipping.
4. Put on your shoe. Sometimes it is easier to do this at the same time as step 2 – test this out to see which method works for you.

If there are knee joints in your KAFO, make sure they are locked before you put weight through your KAFO.



## Do I need to buy special shoes?

KAFOs are designed to be worn with your normal footwear, though you may have to buy shoes in a larger size than usual to accommodate the device. The shoes must have a closed heel and toe and a fastening – laces are ideal, stretching as far down towards the toe as possible (the lower the opening, the better). If there is a removable insole, you should remove it to create extra room.

## How long do I have to wear the KAFO for?

It takes a while to get used to wearing a KAFO, and it may feel uncomfortable to start with. Build up wear time over a few weeks, until you can wear it as required:

Day 1: 30-60 minutes

Day 2: 1-2 hours

Day 3: 2-4 hours

Day 4-7: 4-6 hours

Week 2: 6+ hours, or then as required and comfortable

The length of time you should wear the KAFO for will vary. Some users wear them all day, others only for a few hours. Your orthotist will give you recommendations tailored for you.



Steps, stairs and slopes can feel very different when you are using a KAFO. Take extra care and use handrails where possible.

## Skin care

Check your skin every time you remove your KAFO. It is normal to see red marks, which should disappear within 30 minutes of taking off the device. If they do not go away, or if you notice any blistering or sores, stop wearing the KAFO and contact your orthotist.

A visual check is particularly important if you have reduced sensation in your legs.

## Caring for your KAFO

Like any orthosis, the lifespan of a KAFO depends on how often it is worn and how well it is cared for. You can prolong the life of your KAFO by keeping it clean and dry.

To clean the KAFO, wipe it with a damp cloth then dry it with a towel or leave it to dry naturally. Do not expose the KAFO to excessive heat, such as radiators or fires.

It is important that you check the KAFO for any wear and tear, loose joints, or cracks. If you notice any, stop wearing the device and contact your orthotist. The straps and lining may discolour over time, but this does not affect function. If they start to wear out, you should contact the Orthotic Department to arrange for a repair. Do not try to adjust the KAFO yourself.

You should attend regular reviews to check that your KAFO is still suitable for you and working correctly – your orthotist will advise how frequently you need to make an appointment.

**NOTE:** It is the patients responsibility to ensure that each KAFO be safety checked by the orthotic service once every 6 months. This can be done by either dropping in or posting the KAFO in to the orthotic service with a note stating your name, date of birth and that a safety check is required. No appointment is necessary and the device can either be collected or posted back to you upon completion. If the device is deemed as beyond repair by the orthotic service, the KAFO will be retained and a review appointment will be required.

If you do not have a second wearable KAFO, please contact us to arrange manufacture of your second KAFO.

It is advised that where a safety check has not been conducted within this time frame, that you cease using the given KAFO until it has been safety checked.