ON THE HEALTHY SIDE

“Shoe inserts and orthotics” Dr. Ned Ramadan DPM 203-701-0252

**What are Shoe Inserts?**

Shoe inserts are found almost anywhere in today’s market from the pre-packaged arch supports with various materials to the “custom-made” foot insoles that could be ordered online or at retail stores. Unless the device has been prescribed by a doctor and crafted for your specific foot, it's a shoe insert, not a custom orthotic device.

Custom molded foot orthoses is custom made to your foot and made by your doctor. It has a multitude of benefits that vary for each individual foot type and deformity. They align and correct deformities of the foot such as high arches, flat arches, ankle deformities, lower leg, hip and low back pain.

Consider your health. Do you have diabetes? Problems with circulation? An over-the-counter insert may increase your risk of foot ulcers and infections. A podiatrist can help you select a solution that won't cause additional health problems. Think about the purpose. Are you planning to run a marathon, or do you just need a little arch support in your work shoes? Look for a product that fits your planned level of activity.

**What are Prescription Custom Orthotics?**

**Custom orthotics** are specially-made devices that are only manufactured after a podiatrist has conducted a complete evaluation of your feet, ankles, and legs. The orthotic can accommodate your unique foot structure and are designed to correct and align, relieve symptoms, prevent other aliments from forming, decreases shock and gives support, and comfort *your* feet. Prescription orthotics are crafted for you only. They match the contours of your feet precisely and are designed for every step you take. Prescription orthotics are divided into two categories:

**Functional “Corrective” orthotics** are designed to control abnormal motion that leads to pain. Improper foot function transfers body weight, pressures and forces abnormally through the ankles, legs, knees, hips and spine. Functional/Corrective orthotics are usually crafted of a semi-rigid and rigid materials such as plastic or graphite that vary in thickness/rigidity.

**Accommodative orthotics** are softer and meant to provide additional cushioning and support. They can be used to treat diabetic foot ulcers, painful calluses on the bottom of the foot, and other uncomfortable conditions. Some are cork and leather, sub ortholen, and several thin plastics with poron and spenco top covers for shock absorption.

Podiatrists use orthotics to treat foot problems such as heel pain, plantar fasciitis, bursitis, tendonitis, diabetic foot ulcers, pediatric and geriatric foot deformities, and lower legs deformities. Clinical research studies have shown that podiatrist-prescribed foot orthotics decrease foot pain and improve overall function.

Orthotics cost more than shoe inserts purchased in a retail store. Unlike shoe inserts, orthotics are molded to fit each individual foot to relief symptoms and correct deformity. Prescription orthotics are also made of top-notch materials and last many years when cared for properly. Insurance coverage vary pending on plan.

**When to Visit a Podiatrist**

Your podiatrist will examine your feet and how you walk. He or she will listen carefully to your complaints and concerns and assess the movement and function of your lower extremities. Some also use advanced technology to see how your feet function when walking or running.

The information gathered during the exam will help your podiatrist determine if shoe inserts might be helpful or if you need prescription orthotics. If orthotics are needed, then a set of unique foot supports that will improve your foot movement and lead to more comfort and mobility. Your podiatrist might also suggest additional treatments to improve the comfort and function of your feet.