

How an Ankle Foot Orthosis (AFO) or Functional Electrical Stimulation (FES) Can Help to Improve Function after a Stroke

WHAT IS AN AFO AND HOW CAN IT HELP ME?

- An Ankle Foot Orthosis (AFO) is a brace that covers the foot, ankle, and lower leg.
- An AFO can help your foot stay lifted while you walk. It may also help with controlling your knee.
- AFOs come in different designs and materials and can be customized to your needs.



WHAT IS FES AND HOW CAN IT HELP ME?

- Functional Electrical Stimulation (FES) uses an electrical signal to activate the muscles that lift your foot up while walking.
- FES uses a cuff worn just below your knee.
- The FES turns on when you swing your leg forward while walking.



WHY WOULD I WANT TO USE AN AFO OR FES?

- An AFO or Functional FES may improve your walking, your balance during functional activities, and your quality of life.
- If you have weakness in your leg after a stroke, an AFO or FES may help you by assisting or better positioning your foot and ankle while walking.

IS THERE EVIDENCE THAT AN AFO OR FES CAN HELP AFTER A STROKE?

- There is strong evidence that an AFO or FES can help to improve how fast you walk, how far you can walk, your balance, your performance of daily activities, and your quality of life.
- An AFO or FES may also improve how you walk and can still allow your own muscles to do some of the work while walking.

**MY STROKE
HAPPENED A
LONG TIME AGO.
WILL AN AFO OR
FES HELP ME?**

- There is evidence that people can benefit soon after a stroke as well as many years after a stroke.
- We recommend that you get regular re-evaluations with a physical therapist (PT) to see if an AFO or FES may help you to better meet your goals.

**WHO CAN HELP
ME GET AN AFO
OR FES?**

- A PT can help you to start the process.
- The PT will do an evaluation with you to determine your goals and what you might benefit from.
- If you and the PT decide that you need an AFO or FES, your PT will work with an orthotist and/or an FES device company to get what is best for you.

**WHICH IS
BETTER, AN AFO
OR FES?**

- No one device is best for everyone.
- You and your PT will work together to try different AFOs and FES if these seem appropriate for you.
- You and your PT will decide which one will be best for you. The orthotist and/or someone from an FES device company may also be part of the decision making.

**SHOULD I
ATTEND PT
SESSIONS AFTER
I GET AN AFO
OR FES?**

- Outcomes are best when you attend PT after receiving your AFO or FES.
- Your PT will determine how many sessions that you will need, but you may need around 6 weeks of PT to get the best outcomes.
- It is also important to follow your PT's recommendations to wear the AFO or FES outside of PT.

**WILL MY
INSURANCE PAY
FOR AFO OR
FES?**

- Insurance coverage is variable so check with your insurance company.
- Your PT, the orthotist, and/or someone from an FES device company can help you with the process to see if insurance will pay.
- A simpler AFO design may be able to be purchased out of pocket.