

Thirteen Ways Orthotics Can Help Your Patients

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Along with many of my fellow chiropractors, I strongly believe that prevention is the best care for health-related problems. One of the easiest, most logical and extremely cost-effective steps toward achieving wellness (for people of all ages) is the use of custom-made, flexible orthotics. Just for fun, I started listing the advantages of using orthotics, and as a result, I came up with a baker's-dozen list of the top ways I feel that orthotics can help your patients.

1. *Support for all three arches.* Arch collapse can have detrimental effects on all weight-bearing joints above the feet. Stability of each foot's three-arch structure is essential in providing long-term postural support. The best custom-made orthotics on the market work with chiropractic adjustments to provide stability to the pedal foundation's three-arch "plantar vault" structure while standing (static support) and while in motion (dynamic support).
2. *Add balance to life.* The fact is we are not symmetrical creatures. This fact is further exacerbated when patients suffer from pronation and the body tries to compensate. Since imbalance is one of the most common postural distortions we see as chiropractors - and the source of many conditions - it makes sense to prolong the benefits of adjustments with custom-made orthotics. With custom orthotics, balance is restored, the body is no longer compensating and the result is that many of the pains and physical complaints suffered by patients are alleviated.
3. *Shock absorption.* Along with arch support and restoration of balance, the need to decrease the heel-strike shock that our systems experience during the daily activity of walking is of major importance. Heel-strike shock is a major cause of musculoskeletal difficulties that, when left unchecked, can lead to harmful consequences. While flexible orthotics balance the foot to control pronation, they also allow the movement that is needed to decrease the intensity of the shock received by the body. Recommend custom-made orthotics which offer shock-absorbing materials built into the heel area.
4. *Help reduce biomechanical aches and pains.* Orthotics positively impact the three critical functions of the foot: support, locomotion and shock absorption. The long-term effect caused by abnormalities of the gait cycle leads to asymmetrical compensation by the body. When the body responds in this manner, aches and pains develop throughout the body. By preventing or correcting the critical functions, orthotics relieve the problems before they begin.
5. *Help counteract leg-length inequality.* Whether categorized as structural or functional, leg-length inequality (LLI) can predispose an individual to structural instability, degenerative joint disease and pain. LLI responds well to chiropractic adjustments that are paired with custom-made orthotic support.
6. *Adapt to lifestyle changes.* The human body is constantly in a process of change, whether we're referring to minor processes (such as hair or nail growth) or more consequential occurrences (such as weight increases/reductions, traumatic injury, etc.) For example, pregnancy is a very obvious and consequential lifestyle change. During pregnancy, a woman's center of gravity shifts forward to the front of the pelvis, eventually placing extra

stress on the spine. Added weight and hormonal changes at this time can contribute to a laxity of the foot's arches. All of this can result in postural imbalances, making pregnant women prone to having awkward trips and falls. The addition of supportive, custom-made orthotics to a pregnant patient's health care program can help lessen the rigors of the birth experience.

7. *Improve the biomechanics of the knee.* By reducing the Q-angle, orthotics relieve stress to the knee caused by pronation. Without the added stress, the knee (one of the first casualties of any gait abnormality) stretches and rotates properly.
8. *Align the body.* By addressing all of the above factors, orthotics improve foot alignment and symmetry, and ultimately help improve overall body alignment.
9. *Attain better posture.* With the body in alignment and the patient unburdened by aches and pains, the patient can concentrate on achieving correct stance and posture.
10. *Alleviate complications from conditions that affect the feet.* With many diseases, such as diabetes, there is added stress to the feet that cause complications which can lead to amputation. Since properly fitting footwear is crucial in this case, alleviating the factors that bring about ulcer formation by using orthotics offers a cost-effective preventative measure.
11. *Increase athletic performance.* Because orthotics significantly influence pelvic rotation and stride length, and also serve to reduce fatigue and improve balance, athletes experience a more consistent performance.
12. *Put more "spring" into each step.* Orthotics affect the total body, make the wearer feel better and reduce the effects of fatigue while walking. In addition, the most advanced custom-made orthotics now offer a propulsive material in the forefoot area that provides a "boost" during the toe-off portion of the gait cycle.
13. *Satisfaction.* Because orthotics help to relieve many of the symptoms and complaints suffered by patients, the use of orthotics, along with chiropractic care, will sustain the benefits and ultimate satisfaction received by your patients.

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