

Maximizing Orthotic Results with Proper Footwear

Your best results will start from the ground up. As practitioners we have all experienced frustrating results from a perfectly casted, produce and dispensed orthotic. Many times we forget or do not all evaluate the shoe the orthotic is going into.

Two very important points!

1. A solid platform to place the orthotic on is key.
2. A properly fit shoe with attention to the ball of the foot placement will produce best results.

A commonly used midsole material is EVA (ethyl vinyl acetate). This is a great material for running shoes, it is light weight, it has good resiliency, however it has a short life expectancy. Runners have come to expect that their shoes will last only 300 miles or so. A good motion control shoe usually will have a denser medial EVA or other components to reduce pronation and excessive motion. To compound the problems many running shoe manufacturers sell different tiers of quality. The top tier shoes are sold at quality running shops and shoe stores and look alike products are sold at the mass merchants. The look alike shoes have the same or very similar upper but the midsole has been replaced usually by a single density soft EVA. EVA has a finite number of rebound cycles and when it reaches the end of that life the shoe becomes unbalanced. Many times you will see the lateral border collapsed causing the foot to roll laterally, losing the balance we have been trying to achieve with the orthotic control overwhelming the shoe.

The inside depth of the shoe is also important to properly accommodate the orthotic in the shoe. Choosing the appropriate closure is a must along with having a solid platform that will allow the orthotic and shoe to act as a system and achieve the ultimate stability and support.

A PU (poly urethane) mid sole can offer good resiliency and much longer life with. Traditionally PU midsoles have made the shoe much heavier. Newer technology has made it almost as light as EVA. So consider shoes with a PU midsole or top quality EVA like Aetrex uses as a solution for your patients.

Remember fitting the shoe to the ball of the foot is the best way to insure proper length. This also insures that the integration of the orthotics to the shoe compliments the natural flex of the forefoot.

Educating patients on what to look for in footwear quality and fit will help maximize the results with prescription orthotics.

Next time we will talk more on How the Shoe Fits.

Bob Egeland, C. Ped.

Howard Hillman, C. Ped.

Rocky Mountain Orthotic and Brace Lab