

# THINK YOU CAN BENEFIT FROM THE USE OF FOOT ORTHOTICS?

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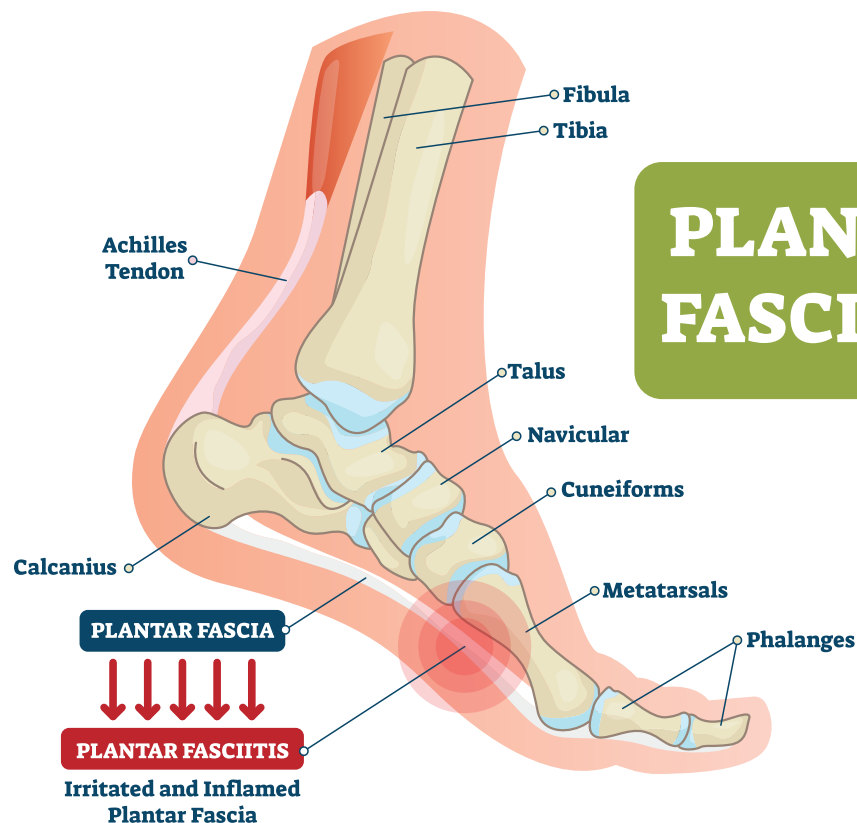
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**'Orthotics'** is a term frequently associated with the foot, but according to podiatrist Lim Yuanshuang, they can be applied to any part of the body.

She explains that orthotics are something that is applied to and molded to the shape of a part of the body, such as the hips and the joints, to help correct issues related to that part of the body.

In this article, however, we will take a closer look at Yuanshuang's specialty: foot orthotics, and how they can be of benefit to people with certain foot conditions.



## PLANTAR FASCIITIS

### ORTHOTICS ARE NOT EXACTLY THE SAME THING AS INSOLES

Orthotics are something that can be worn inside our shoes, just like insoles, but there are some differences.

#### Insoles are not customized and they are not medical devices

Normal insoles are generally available in pre-determined sizes (small, medium, large; higher arch or lower arch, etc) and can be bought from a store. They are *not* customized to meet a person's specific needs.

Insoles are designed to make a person feel more comfortable while moving, by providing more cushioning to the feet. However, they are not designed to address or correct foot problems.

#### Orthotics, however, are medical devices to help address one's specific foot problems

Orthotics can be helpful for people that have biomechanical foot problems (such as difficulties in walking, standing, running, etc).

They can also be worn to help reduce pain experienced by people with bunions, diabetic neuropathy, arthritis, etc when they have to walk.

### THERE ARE 3 TYPES OF FOOT ORTHOTICS

**Off-the-shelf orthotics** are pre-made orthotics that are sold in specialty stores. Yuanshuang explains that one just have to walk into the store, have their feet measured, and buy the orthotics that can fit their size.

**Custom-made orthotics** is popular in Malaysia. One's foot arch is first measured, and then the store will print out the orthotics that will meet the specific size of the person.

**Prescription orthotics** is the most specialized type. Yuanshuang explains that these are prescription medical devices that are designed after the podiatrist has assessed the person's foot issues.

### POSSIBLE USES OF ORTHOTICS

- Correct foot problems in kids, such as in-toeing gait
- Help to improve the function of the ankle and foot
- Provide support to weakened or deformed ankles
- Reducing the risk of foot injuries
- Manage feet pain and structural conditions (such as flat feet and plantar fasciitis), preventing them from becoming worse

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### PRESCRIPTION ORTHOTICS: A HIGHLY CUSTOMIZED AND TAILOR-FITTED SOLUTION

Unlike off-the-shelf and custom-made orthotics, **prescription orthotics** are offered after a podiatrist has evaluated their patient's foot problems.

Before deciding whether a patient will benefit of using orthotics, Yuanshuang explains that the podiatrist will first conduct some tests.

There will be a physical examination of the problematic foot, for the podiatrist to check for issues such as deformities or pain, and the extent of such problems.

The podiatrist will then ask the patient to perform some actions

involving the foot, such as walking, so that they can assess the movement pattern of the patient's feet (gait), the positioning of the foot and ankles during these activities, and more.

If necessary, such as in the case of a patient with arthritis, the podiatrist may also call for imaging tests, such as X-ray and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), on the affected foot or feet.

With all the data gathered from these tests, the podiatrist will then make an assessment and discuss with the patient on the best treatment options available, which may or may not include orthotics.

If the patient can benefit from the use of orthotics, then the podiatrist will

order one that is custom-fitted for the patient, to support the patient's ability to move on their feet.

Given how prescription orthotics are offered only after a thorough examination and assessment by a podiatrist, someone with foot problems may **get more out of them** compared to off-the-shelf and custom-made ones.

### THINKING OF GETTING ORTHOTICS? GET A PODIATRIST INVOLVED IN YOUR DECISION-MAKING

"Every patient is different," Yuanshuang says, with reference to her patient's foot problems.

Hence, a podiatrist's presence is important in determining whether one can and will benefit from the use of orthotics. Yuanshuang notes that off-the-shelf and custom-made orthotics are sometimes sold in stores without any involvement of a podiatrist.

She also adds that orthotics are not the be-all and end-all treatment for foot problems. Sometimes, orthotics are just one of the treatments offered—the person with the foot problems may also require physical therapy, for example. If the patient needs other forms of treatment, the podiatrist can discuss the matter further with them.

Thus, it may be a good idea to consult a podiatrist first, instead of walking into a store to purchase orthotics all on our own!