

Your Physiotherapist has recommended that your child is suitable for serial ankle bracing. This leaflet will explain how it works and what will happen at their appointments.

What is serial ankle bracing?

Your child may be seeing a physiotherapist for some of the following reasons

- Tight calf muscles
- Toe walking
- Increased muscle tone (stiffness) and not tolerating their ankle splints (AFOs)

Serial ankle bracing is a non-surgical treatment used to gradually stretch tight or stiff calf muscles. It involves applying a thermoplastic brace to the lower leg to hold it in a stretched position. Every one to two weeks the brace is remoulded to increase the stretch, over a period of four to six weeks.

Your physiotherapist will have arranged appointments for your child in advance (each can take up to an hour). **It is important to attend all appointments so the brace can be remoulded regularly.**

On the day

To keep your child distracted during their appointment, you may like to bring something for them to watch or listen to.

Your physiotherapist will apply a warm thermoplastic sleeve brace (Turtle brace) and mould it to your child's lower leg, ankle and foot. Your physiotherapist will hold the ankle in a stretched position until the brace cools and hardens to the correct position.

The brace fits inside your child's shoe so **please remember to bring trainers/ shoes to each appointment.** Please wear baggy trousers or shorts so the clothes can be pulled over the brace. At first your child may find the brace tricky to walk in, but they should quickly get used to them.

How long will they be in casts?

At their next appointment, and future appointments, your physiotherapist will check your child's skin and range of movement. If there are no concerns, then the remoulding process will be repeated, with the stretch being increased each time. The process may take up to four weeks depending on tightness or how their muscle responds to stretching.

At home

It is highly recommended to always wear a shoe/ sandal when walking in the brace to prevent slipping. This includes after swimming and whilst showering. During serial ankle bracing your child can continue to participate in PE and sport, but please avoid repetitive jumping. Please avoid playing with sand as this can cause irritation and rubbing inside the brace.

Please encourage the following;

- Walking and standing with straight knees and heels down
- Sitting with knees straight on a supported surface e.g. sofa
- Doing regular home exercises as instructed by your physiotherapist.

What to look out for / Removing the brace

It is likely you will be advised to leave the brace on until your next review. If however you need to remove the brace for any reason, it can be unzipped, taking care not to catch the skin underneath. If you're removing the brace due to concerns regarding circulation, pain or altered sensation then please update your child's therapist ASAP to discuss.

- **Circulation**-Your child's toes should be pink and warm to touch with no signs of swelling. They should not be blue or red, swollen or very hot or cold to touch.
- **Pain**- Once the brace is in place, your child should not find it painful but may feel some mild discomfort due to stretching. Bending and straightening the knee can help. If your child complains of pain at a specific point, this might suggest an area of pressure from the brace which should be checked by removing it.
- **Sensation**- If your child complains of numbness, burning, tingling or 'pins and needles' at any stage, remove the brace.
- **Objects in brace or Itchiness**- Please avoid putting anything down the brace, including to scratch an itch. The brace can be removed to check the area. If the itchiness is frequent, wash the brace in cold water thoroughly, rinsing it twice to remove any soap residue. Please avoid letting you child play in sand wearing the brace.

The brace can be removed by the zipper to check the skin, and reapplied if all is fine.

Caring for your brace

To maximise your child's comfort and safety, please follow these recommendations:

- Where possible do not let your child walk in their brace without a shoe or holding onto a support due the risk of slipping.
- The brace is breathable therefore if the brace has been wet, it will dry by itself in about 45 min. To speed up the drying process, a hair dryer set at cool (NO HEAT) can be used.
- Do not dry the brace in a dryer or by placing it next to a heat source of over 58°C.

If you have any further questions please telephone the Physiotherapy department on any of the numbers below:

01493 442322 or 01493 661424 during the hours of 8:30 and 16:30 Monday to Friday

Your Feedback

We want your visit to be as comfortable as possible - talk to the person in charge if you have any concerns. If the ward/department staff are unable to resolve it, then ask for our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) information. Please be assured that raising a concern will not impact on your care.

Before leaving please complete a Friends and Family Test feedback card.

Help us transform NHS services and to support patient choice.

OUR VALUES

Collaboration

We work positively with others to achieve shared aims

Accountability

We act with professionalism and integrity, delivering what we commit to, embedding learning when things do not go to plan

Respect

We are anti-discriminatory, treating people fairly and creating a sense of belonging and pride

Empowerment

We speak out when things don't feel right, we are innovative and make changes to support continuous improvement

Support

We are compassionate, listen attentively and are kind to ourselves and each other



The hospital can arrange for an interpreter or person to sign to assist you in communicating effectively with staff during your stay. Please let us know.

For a large print version of this leaflet, contact PALS 01493 453240