Orthopaedic Footwear Classifications Document

Pedorthic Association of Canada and Association des Orthésistes et des Prothésistes du Québec

The three qualifications necessary to consider the recommendation of orthopaedic footwear are:

1. MEDICAL NEED:

As Determined by:
- Congenital Deformity
- Disease process
- Injury/Trauma/Wound
- Foot Deformity
- Foot and Lower Limb Misalignment
- Neurological and Vascular Deficiencies

2. PRACTITIONER QUALIFICATION:

Any type of orthopaedic footwear must be measured and fit by a qualified foot care provider. In the province of Québec the professional must be a member of good standing of the order of Professional Technicians of Québec (“Ordre de Technologues Professionel du Québec”) Outside of Québec in Canada the professionals who have the most training in the design, fitting, manufacture and modification of orthopaedic and other footwear are Canadian Certified Pedorthists, who are certified and regulated by The College of Pedorthics of Canada.

3. FOOTWEAR CATEGORY:

The Pedorthic Association of Canada and the Association des Orthésistes et des Prothésistes du Québec, have adopted a 3 level categorization for footwear deemed to be “orthopaedic”. The categories are primarily based on the severity of the patient’s medical need and the footwear required to address that need.
Category 1:

Footwear in this category are custom made and are used for clients whose foot shape or condition cannot be accommodated by existing products (either orthopaedic off-the-shelf footwear or modified orthopaedic off-the-shelf footwear). Custom-made orthopaedic footwear is designed to accommodate the bony and structural abnormalities of the feet and lower legs resulting from trauma, disease or congenital deformities. They take into account the gait abnormalities and range of motion functions of the foot, ankle and lower extremities. Design consideration is given to the style, type of closure (laces, Velcro, etc.) and sole finishing based on the patient's upper body impairments.

The fabrication of custom-made orthopaedic footwear involves making a custom last, which is an accurate representation of the patient's foot and ankle. The lasts are fabricated from full castings of the foot and ankle or using a true 3-D digitizing device that captures a full, digitized image of the plantar and dorsal aspects of the foot and ankle. The word last defines the three dimensional model or mold that is designed from the cast, and used in the fabrication process for the footwear. The last may involve the manipulation of soft tissue or accommodation of bony prominences of the plantar and/or dorsal areas of each foot. All custom-made orthopaedic footwear requires a last of the foot and ankle that may be reused with modification if necessary. All patterns are cut to reflect the true individual design of the lasts. Boots, shoes and sandals that are made from 100% raw materials using this unique last shape are considered to be custom-made. This category of footwear will typically take many weeks to produce.

Custom-made orthopaedic footwear may cost, on average, approximately $1,200- $2,700 per pair of shoes (custom-made sandals would be in the range of $600- $1,000) and could possibly exceed this amount in more complex cases. While these are approximate costs for Canadian custom footwear, regional differences may exist in pricing. Custom-made orthopaedic footwear is reserved for the most serious of foot and ankle fitting problems.

The custom-made orthopaedic footwear may include custom foot orthoses, brace work, interior and/or exterior modifications, which may be incorporated into the total cost of the shoe, but should be listed separately.

Retail footwear is not custom-made footwear. The addition of a modification or custom foot orthotic does not transform retail into custom-made.

Category 2:

Footwear in this category is not custom made. However the design and function are specifically manufactured to address a particular medical condition (e.g. severe hallux valgus, hammer toes and other foot deformities).

This type of footwear is designed and manufactured for medical conditions that are severe in nature, but do not necessarily require custom made footwear. These patients cannot be fit with “Standard” or Category 3 footwear. Footwear in this category can only be fitted by qualified footcare professionals and are found only in specialty clinics/centres.
Category 3:

Footwear in this category is used in less severe cases than those requiring Category 1 or 2 footwear. This type of footwear has specific design and manufacture features which distinguish them from “standard” footwear.

Footwear in this category must address the patient’s specific medical condition by exhibiting all appropriate features listed below:

- removable sock liner/insole to accommodate prescribed orthotic devices
- additional depth built into the footwear upper, sock-liner, or additional insole inlay
- adjustable closure (i.e. laces, Velcro) to secure hind-foot position inside the shoe
- a smooth protective inner lining
- broad insole, last patterns and upper width that entirely accommodate the anatomy of the foot (NOTE: extra narrow last, upper and insole patterns may be required in some instances to accommodate the patient's individual needs)
- appropriate stability through the outer sole
- a heel counter that is appropriate based on medical need:
  - heel stability via a firm and/or extended heel counter to enhance subtalar stability and orthosis efficacy; and
  - a soft heel counter, strap or open heel to accommodate heel pathologies, for example an ulceration caused by diabetes or peripheral vascular disease (a symptomatic Haglund’s deformity)

- an outer sole that is equal to, or exceeds the width of the upper
- an outer sole with sufficient toe spring (forefoot roll) to promote normal gait cycle
- a shoe that is conducive to permanent modification(s)

These are guidelines only and interpretation must be left to qualified footcare providers whose education includes extensive training in footwear features, fit, function and modification.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Footwear and orthopaedic modifications are separate items and services and therefore should be clearly billed as separate items. (Please see position statement on shoe modification billing.) Custom made orthopaedic footwear cannot be made by modifying footwear.