



**American Orthotic &
Prosthetic Association**

What is a Prosthetist?

A prosthetist is a highly-skilled health care professional specifically educated and trained in all aspects of the provision of prosthetic (artificial limb) services to amputees. The responsibilities of a prosthetist include: patient assessment, formulation and implementation of a treatment plan and appropriate follow-up care (which encompasses training the patient to maximize effectiveness of the new limb), as well as designing, fabricating, fitting and adjusting the prosthesis to meet the individual needs of each patient. Proper prosthetic treatment results in the creation of a customized device that takes into account the unique shape, amputation level (above or below knee or elbow), physical condition and activity level of each patient in order to facilitate the highest possible degree of function and mobility.

Individuals who have experienced amputations due to accidents, congenital defects, or disease such as diabetes or cardiovascular illness require the care of a qualified prosthetist to help them return to a fully functional lifestyle. All services provided by a prosthetist must be performed based upon a physician's prescription.

What is an Orthotist?

An orthotist is a highly-skilled health care professional specifically educated in all aspects of the provision of orthotic (orthopedic brace) services to a wide range of patients. The responsibilities of an orthotist include: patient assessment, formulation and implementation of a treatment plan and appropriate follow-up care, as well as designing, fabricating, fitting and repairing orthoses. Proper orthotic treatment ensures an individualized fit to each patient's unique shape, condition and activity level in order to maximize function, and mobility and/or to promote healing.

Orthotic treatment is a medically ordered service that provides support and protection for body parts that have been weakened or malformed due to injury, disease, disorders of nerves, muscles and bones or birth defects. For example, individuals who have cerebral palsy, hemophilia, brittle bone disease, spina bifida, and malformation of the long bones are assisted by an orthotist in order to restore mobility and function. Fractures, brain damage, muscle, tendon and cartilage tears, scoliosis and spinal cord injuries are also often helped by orthoses. Orthotic treatment also benefits those with neuromuscular conditions caused by stroke, muscular dystrophy, arthritis, diabetes and multiple sclerosis. All services provided by an orthotist must be performed based on a prescription of a physician.

Payment for Services

Medicare payment for any orthotic or prosthetic service includes the payment for the device itself, patient evaluation to select the appropriate device, all services necessary to fabricate and fit the device to meet the patient's unique needs as well as a 90-day follow-up period where the device may require adjustment.

January 2008