

Custom Foot Orthotics vs Store-Bought Arch Supports

Are All Created Equal?



Store-bought arch supports (also known as prefabricated shoe inserts or insoles) are everywhere lately: retail stores, pharmacies, the mall... Manufacturers advertise “custom-made” foot supports, which are often pre-packaged and sold according to shoe size. Unless the device has been prescribed by a doctor and crafted for your specific foot, it's a prefabricated arch support, not a custom orthotic device—despite what radio, television and newspaper ads might say.

Although store-bought arch supports aren't covered by insurance, they can prove valuable for patients with minor foot or arch pain. Podiatry practices also utilize such sup-

ports to provide temporary relief while patients' custom orthotics are being made.

What are Custom Foot Orthotics?

Much like eyeglasses or dentures, custom foot orthotics are crafted just for you. They match the contours of your feet precisely and are designed for the way you move. They give you optimal support, provide shock absorption, and help eliminate pain.

How are Custom Foot Orthotics Made?

At Albany Podiatry, we create a digital impression of the foot using a 3-D podiatric scanner. To display your natural arch, the scan must be done without bearing weight on the foot. The doctor places your foot

in a neutral position while a laser captures the contours of the foot in ultra-precise 1mm increments. After discussing your lifestyle, conditions, and footwear, the podiatrist designs an individual prescription, specifically for you. The data is then sent to a lab where a 3-dimensional model of your foot is created. The materials are heat molded and vacuum pressed to the model of your foot. A few weeks later, your orthotics are ready and you are evaluated by the doctor to ensure proper fit. *This* is custom. If you received an insert from a store that didn't take the time to build a model of your foot, then you did not receive a custom orthotic. You received a prefabricated arch support.

Who Would Benefit from Custom Foot Orthotics?

Insurance companies often recognize the value of custom foot orthotics because they effectively treat many medical conditions, including plantar fasciitis, ankle pain, arthritis, bunions, swelling, limb length discrepancy, and heel pain. They are also frequently used to help prevent diabetic patients from developing calluses or sores.

Before making a purchase, see your podiatrist for a thorough evaluation. We'll help determine which type of support is best to keep you active, moving, and on your feet!

Albany Podiatry is located at 6 Executive Park Drive, just behind Stuyvesant Plaza. Drs. Friedman, Mason, and Hardy specialize in comprehensive podiatric care, including diabetic foot care, foot surgery, sports medicine, and custom orthotics. For more information visit www.albanypodiatry.com or call Albany Podiatry at (518) 482-4321.