

Shoe Inserts are a Shoe-In for Golfers

By Rick Olderman MSPT

In golf, even a small edge can put you ahead of the pack. If you've never considered shoe inserts (foot orthoses), think again. In several studies,^{1,2,3} shoe inserts were shown to increase club head velocity (CHV), improve balance and proprioception (joint awareness), decrease fatigue, and decrease foot and knee pain (in runners).

In the first study,¹ after six weeks of orthotic wear, CHV increased and average of 3-5 mph (a 5 mph increase in CHV equates to approximately a 15-yard increase in distance). Along with the second study, this study found that golfers experienced less fatigue after 9 holes of golf. Fatigue is often one of the primary contributors to poor golf performance and injury.

The third study³, although focusing on runners, found that after 6 weeks of orthotic wear, runners experienced significant reduction in foot and knee pain. Essentially orthotics helped prevent excessive rotational torque at the ankle, foot and knee. Rotation is one of the most difficult motions for the body to control. Golf is all about rotation. Therefore any help in controlling this, reduces fatigue and chance of injury.

Unfortunately finding a properly fitted pair of orthoses is more difficult than you would think. It breaks my heart to see clients bring in their shoe inserts for which they've paid hundreds or sometimes thousands of dollars, only to find they are not helping the feet.

One of the reasons for this is that many companies use a pre-fabricated mold that most closely fits the needs of a patient's foot based on a pressure plate analysis or light model. These are *customized* orthoses, not to be confused with *custom-made* orthoses.

Customized orthoses are a *pre-fabricated* arch support that is the closest match to a foot analysis. It may or may not be an adequate fit. Custom-made shoe inserts fit one foot and one foot only—yours. Often there are differences between the left and right feet that customized orthoses cannot adequately correct. I use a system to custom-make orthoses to address each individual's needs. This system is also used by the Denver Broncos and a myriad of other professional athletes and teams.

1. Effects of orthotic intervention and nine holes of simulated golf on club-head velocity in experienced golfers. [J Manipulative Physiol Ther](#). 2000 Mar-Apr;23(3):168-74.
2. Effects of nine holes of simulated golf and orthotic intervention on balance and proprioception in experienced golfers. [J Manipulative Physiol Ther](#). 1997 Nov-Dec;20(9):590-601.
3. Short- and long-term influences of a custom foot orthotic intervention on lower extremity dynamics. [Clin J Sport Med](#). 2008 Jul;18(4):338-43.