

## Lesson one: Introduction

Rigid removable boots are boots that fit over the foot and lower leg, below the knee. They help injuries to heal by reducing movement of the foot and ankle. Some people can continue to walk with the rigid removable boot while their injury heals.

Rigid removable boots are good for people who have an injury to their foot or ankle, including:

- Some types of broken bones
- Soft tissue injuries to the foot and ankle
- People who have had surgery to repair broken bones or soft tissues in their foot or ankle.

Rigid removable boots are suitable for stable injuries:

- The doctor will assess if the person's injury is stable. Stable injuries can safely be held in position by the rigid removable boot.
- If their injury is not stable, they must not be referred for a rigid removable boot.

Providing a rigid removable boot for a person with a diabetic foot wound, without appropriate wound and medical management can make the wound worse.

A rigid removable boot holds the person's ankle in a fixed position of 90 degrees. Features of the rigid removable boot include:

- **Different sizes** for adults and children
- **Inner liner** for comfort and to protect the skin
- **Adjustable straps** to adjust the fit of the boot
- **Rocker shaped sole** to assist with smooth walking
- **Light weight uprights** made from plastic or aluminium.

Casts can also be used for some of the same injuries that a rigid removable boot is used for.

Advantages of rigid removable boots over casts are that they:

- Are easier to walk in as they have a rocker shaped sole
- Can be removed, for the person to wash themselves and check their skin
- Can be adjusted if the foot/leg changes size or shape due to swelling
- Can be fitted more quickly
- Are more durable.

## Lesson two: Select and fit

The referral form has important information for the referrer about when a rigid removable boot can and cannot be used. The referrer uses this information to make sure the rigid removable boot is suitable.

Always check the referral form is complete then use the assess and fit form to complete the assessment and fit the rigid removable boot.

Information from the referral form and your assessment will help you:

- Choose the correct side and size rigid removable boot.
- Check fit and mobility with the rigid removable boot
- Plan what to teach the person
- Plan follow up
- Make referrals to other services.

Weightbearing with a rigid removable boot:

- If a person is **non** weight bearing or semi weight bearing they will need to use a walking aid for their safe mobility. To select a suitable walking aid, complete a walking aid assessment.
- If a person is full weight bearing and not at risk of falls, no walking aid is needed.

If a person is at risk of falling, they may need:

- A more supportive walking aid
- More teaching and support to walk safely
- For some people, a wheelchair will be the safest option for their mobility while they are using a rigid removable boot.

Fitting a rigid removable boot:

- Put the liner on first and place foot into the rigid removable boot
- Check the position of foot and side uprights
- Fasten the straps in the correct order.
- Check fit:
  - Toes at least thumb width from the end.
  - Top of rigid removable boot three finger widths below knee cap.

After checking the fit, remember to check that the person can safely walk with the rigid removable boot.

At the end of the assessment and fit, you should make a plan.

The plan includes:

- Mobility plan: How the person will walk with rigid removable boot
- Teaching plan: What you will teach the person and/or their family or carer
- If an assessment, screening or referrals are needed
- Follow up date
- When to return to referrer.

## Lesson three: Teach

Correct use of the rigid removable boot prevents:

- Another injury or
- Damage to the skin inside the rigid removable boot.

Explain to the person:

- If the doctor has asked **not to take the rigid removable boot off**, it should not be removed at any time without talking with the doctor first.
- If the doctor has said the rigid removable boot **can be taken off when the person is washing or sleeping**, they may remove it for these activities.
- Do not stand or walk without the rigid removable boot on
- Sit down before removing the boot
- If you take the rigid removable boot off for sleeping, keep it beside your bed.

Show the person how to put the rigid removable boot on:

1. Prepare	2. Put on	3. Check comfort
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Always check inside the rigid removable boot for any objects before putting it on</li> <li>Check your foot and leg for any new marks or damaged skin</li> <li>Wear a long clean sock. Change the sock each day if the referrer has said the rigid removable boot can be removed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sit down with knee bent</li> <li>Put foot inside the rigid removable boot with your heel at the back of the lining</li> <li>Wrap the liner around the leg and make sure there are no wrinkles</li> <li>Do up the straps in the correct order: ankle, foot, calf.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The straps should be firm but not cause any pain.</li> </ul>

Show the person how to safely take off the rigid removable boot:

- Undo all straps
- Unwrap lining
- Carefully take the foot out of the rigid removable boot with as little movement as possible
- Do not remove the lining from the rigid removable boot.

Explain how to protect the rigid removable boot and leg when washing and sleeping:

- Use pillow and cover for sleeping
- Cover with plastic for washing if it cannot be removed.

## Lesson four: Follow up

Follow up within one week if there are issues of concern about the person, including swelling, skin problems, problems with feeling or unusual feelings (sensation) in their feet, or balance problems

Follow up at six weeks if the person will use the rigid removable boot longer than six weeks.

For people recommended follow up after one week, check:

- The rigid removable boot is not making any problems worse**, for people with skin problems or problems with feeling (sensation) in their feet.
- The rigid removable boot is fitting well, for people with swelling problems.
- The person can safely walk with the rigid removable boot if you are concerned about their balance.

For follow up after six weeks, check the rigid removable boot to see if anything is worn out or broken. Check:

- The straps are all there and not broken
- The sole is in good condition
- After six weeks the liner will usually be dirty. The liner should be replaced during this follow up.

At the end of the follow up, plan follow up actions. Use the information you collected to decide with the person if:

- Another planned follow up is needed
- The person is still safe to use their rigid removable boot
- Referral to other services is needed.

The doctor will make the decision when the rigid removable boot is no longer needed.