

Lesson one: Introduction

Therapeutic footwear are shoes that are designed to protect feet that are at risk of developing a foot wound.

People at moderate to high risk of foot wounds who do not already have a foot wound can benefit from therapeutic footwear. Therapeutic footwear is not designed to treat a foot wound that is already there.

Therapeutic footwear comes in different sizes and styles, including:

- Closed shoe
- Open heeled
- Open toed sandal.

Important features of therapeutic footwear include:

- Removable insole
- Toe space and width
- Stretchable upper
- Forefoot rocker
- Rolled seams.

Lesson two: Step 1: Select

Before selecting the type of therapeutic footwear with a person, first make sure that therapeutic footwear is suitable. Check this with a foot screen.

A person must have had a foot screen within one month of being fit for therapeutic footwear. If they have not, a new foot screen is needed. When doing the foot screen if you notice a foot wound, you should not continue the assessment. Refer the person to have the wound cared for.

If therapeutic footwear is suitable for the person, the correct style and size should be selected. To select the right type of therapeutic footwear, talk to the person about their environment, needs and preferences. Also talk to them about their ability to put on and take off the shoes.

To select the correct size of therapeutic footwear you need to measure the foot with a tracing. This will show you how long and how wide the foot is.

Lesson three: Step 2: Fit

Information from your assessment will help you:

- Choose the correct type and size therapeutic footwear
- Check fit and mobility with the therapeutic footwear
- Plan what to teach the person
- Plan follow up
- Make referrals to other services.

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

- A walking aid
- More teaching and support to walk safely.

Assist the person and their family members or carer to fit the therapeutic footwear by:

1. Making sure there are no creases in the socks
2. Opening the straps wide
3. Slide the toes into the shoe first
4. Slide in heel second
5. Make sure there are no creases in the back of the shoe
6. If the shoe has a tongue, pull it to make sure it is flat
7. Do up the straps.

Check the fit for the following:

- **Depth:** Toes move freely up and down (wiggle).
- **Length:** Thumb width from end of big toe to end of shoes.
- **Heel:** Back of shoe fits heel and ankle comfortably and heel does not slip in and out of the back of the shoe.
- **Width:** Not too tight or too loose.

After checking the fit, remember to check that the person can safely walk with the therapeutic footwear.

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

The plan includes:

- **Mobility plan:** How the person will walk with therapeutic footwear if they are not used to it
- **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 four: Use

Correct use of therapeutic footwear prevents the development of foot wounds.

Explain to the person:

- They should wear their therapeutic footwear when walking inside and outside.
- They must check their feet for any problems, like red marks, or wounds every day. If any problems are found, the person should come back to have their footwear checked as soon as possible.
- If they notice a foot wound, they should seek medical care within 24 hours.
- Appropriate socks to wear are cotton and firmly fitted.
- If the footwear gets damaged the person should return for follow up.

Teach the person how to put on their therapeutic footwear:

1. Open the straps of the shoe
2. Slide the toes into the shoe first, then the heel
3. Make sure there are no creases in the back of the shoe
4. If the shoe has a tongue, pull it to make sure it is flat
5. Do up the straps.

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

For follow up after one week, check:

- The therapeutic footwear is not causing any problems, especially for people with skin problems or problems with feeling (sensation) in their feet.
- The therapeutic footwear is fitting well, especially for people with swelling problems.
- The person can safely walk with their therapeutic footwear.

For follow up after four weeks, check the therapeutic footwear to see if anything is worn out or broken.

Check:

- The straps are all there and not broken
- The sole is in good condition.

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 therapeutic footwear
- Referral to other services is needed.