



# Your Path to Becoming a Podiatrist



# What is a Pedorthist

and How Can You Become One?

## An Exciting Health Care Profession Awaits You

### The Pedorthic Profession

**P**edorthics is the design, manufacture, modification and fit of footwear, shoes and foot orthoses to alleviate problems caused by disease, overuse, congenital condition or injury.

The profession of pedorthics began to emerge in the late 1950s, after World War II and an outbreak of polio created a need to deal with foot trauma through footwear. Today, pedorthics is a well-established allied health profession contributing an invaluable service to public health.

### In This Guide:

- **Pedorthists and Their Role in Health Care**
- **Part of the Health Care Team**
- **Practicing Pedorthists**
- **Education and Training in Pedorthics**
- **About ABC and PFA**



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## Pedorthists and Their Role in Health Care

**A** pedorthist is a health care professional who is specifically educated and trained to manage comprehensive pedorthic patient care. This includes patient assessment, formulation of a treatment plan, implementation of the treatment plan, follow-up and practice management.

Pedorthists specialize in using therapeutic shoes, shoe modifica-

tions for therapeutic purposes, partial foot prosthesis and foot orthoses to address lower-limb related problems and pathologies that originate at the ankle or below.

A pedorthist understands the properties of footwear and the interaction between the patient's foot and a pedorthic device or shoe. This makes them highly skilled at evaluating feet, providing foot orthoses and fitting footwear.

When a foot requires medical attention, footwear becomes a key component in the patient's treatment, recovery or rehabilitation. A doctor treats the patient's foot and a pedorthist addresses the patient's footwear needs.

After the physician has determined what kind of assistance the footwear should provide, patient, a prescription is written informing the pedorthist about what care is needed.

Everything that surrounds or touches the foot—whether it's foot orthoses, shoes, boots, slippers, sandals, socks, hosiery, night splints, partial-foot prostheses or other devices—interacts with the

foot and affects a patient's ability to walk. A pedorthist selects and modifies footwear and/or other pedorthic devices to help people maintain or regain as much mobility as possible. They also possess the skills and knowledge to make adjustments both inside and outside of footwear, which includes creating items to further assist in a patient's recovery.

Foot orthoses are an important component of footwear that can accommodate, support or relieve specific conditions, as well as



improve the foot's function. In addition to designing and fabricating an appropriate orthosis, a pedorthist provides personalized attention in selecting, fitting and modifying shoes so that the orthosis can be worn and function effectively.

Pedorthists follow up with patients to make sure the footwear and pedorthic devices function as the doctor has prescribed. A footwear prescription takes into account the patient's medical history, activities of daily living and treatment goals.

## Part of the Health Care Team

Pedorthists give physicians a range of conservative, or non-surgical, treatment options.

**I**ncreasingly, doctors and other qualified prescribers write prescriptions for footwear and pedorthic devices to relieve pressure, redistribute weight, accommodate or support medical conditions, prevent injuries, compensate for imbalances or overuse and pre-

clude further damage to the foot.

In addition to addressing lower limb problems, prescriptions for footwear and pedorthic devices can address foot-related problems, such as lower back pain, knee pain or other limits to a patient's physical activities.

# Practicing Pedorthists

Pedorthists practice in a variety of settings.

**M**any of them work in private practice, either in clinical settings or retail environment, seeing patients by appointment.

Others work in hospitals and larger multi-service practices as

part of an in-house treatment team. The future prospect of the field is unlimited based on the growing number of people with health conditions related to the pedorthic practice area, such as diabetes.

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## Education and Training in Pedorthics

The practice of pedorthics requires knowledge of anatomy, pathology and biomechanics that involves human locomotion, gait analysis, kinesiology and other related fields.

**S**tudents attend specialized pedorthic educational programs to learn about footwear fitting, foot orthosis design, fabrication and materials, shoe construction and modification, and patient and practice management.

A list of **approved pedorthic education courses** is available on the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics (ABC) website. All listed courses are approved by the National Commission on Orthotic

and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE), the recognized authority for the development and approval of pedorthic education. Many courses

combine online learning with in-person training, providing the flexibility to learn at your own pace and minimize expenses for classes outside of your geographic region.

Once an individual has completed the pedorthic course, they can begin training and gain experience utilizing pedorthic treatment



and techniques in a professional setting. After completion of 1,000 hours of practical experience, candidates are eligible to sit for the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics and Pedorthics Certified Pedorthist (C.Ped.) examination.

The examination to become



an ABC C.Ped. is a three hour, multiple-choice computer based exam consisting of 165 items designed to measure the candidate's knowledge of pedorthics. The exam tests candidates on pedorthic assessment, formulation and implementation of a treatment plan, follow-up, practice management, ethics and professionalism.

Exams are given three times a year at 250 locations nationwide.

Additional information on application deadlines, examination dates and a copy of the *Certified Pedorthist Book of Rules and Candidate Guide* are available on the **ABC website**.

C.Peds. maintain their credential by participating in ABC's Mandatory Continuing Education (MCE) Program. In order to renew their credential, certificants must earn 55 continuing education credits at the end of a five-year MCE cycle. Some states require a license or C.Ped. certification to practice pedorthics. In those states, ABC provides licensure exams. Individuals should check their state's specific requirements.



## American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics and Pedorthics, Inc.

**E**stablished in 1948, the American Board for Certification (ABC) is the national certifying and accrediting body for the orthotic, prosthetic and pedorthic professions. ABC has become the quality standard in O, P & P certification and today has more than 13,000 certified individuals. The ABC *Scope of Practice for Pedorthics* sets the standards for pedorthic practice and is available on the **ABC website**. ABC grants the C.Ped. designation to individuals who meet the eligibility criteria and have successfully passed the Pedorthic Examination. For more information, visit ABC's website at **abcop.org**.



### American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics & Pedorthics, Inc.

330 John Carlyle St., Suite 210  
Alexandria, Va. 22314  
(703) 836-7114  
Fax: (703) 836-0838

## Pedorthic Footcare Association

**F**ounded in 1958, the Pedorthic Footcare Association (PFA) is a non-profit membership association of individuals and companies from a variety of disciplines who share an interest in pedorthics, from practice to education and research. Members include individuals, facilities where pedorthics is practiced, and manufacturers and suppliers of pedorthic products and services. For details, visit PFA's website at **pedorthics.org**.



### Pedorthic Footcare Association

P.O. Box 72184  
Americus, Ga. 31709  
(229) 389-3440  
Fax: (888) 563-0945

