CLINICAL STUDIES

Comparison of Custom and Prefabricated Orthoses in the Initial Treatment of Proximal Plantar Fasciitis

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236 patients in 15 Foot and Ankle Centers across the country were evaluated to determine the best and most cost-effective initial treatment of proximal plantar fasciitis.

Patients were divided into five groups. Each group performed Achilles Tendon and Plantar Fascia stretching in a similar manner. One group followed only a stretching program. The other groups each used a different orthotic device including: 1) Tuli Heel Cup; 2) Bauerfeind ViscoSpot; 3) Custom polypropylene medial longitudinal arch support; 4) Hapad Comforthotic.

After 8 weeks of treatment, the patients were reevaluated. The Bauerfeind ViscoSpot used in combination with stretching exercises was the most effective treatment tested, with a 95% success rate. Scores for other methods included: Tuli 88%; Hapad 81%; Stretching alone 72%; Custom orthotic 68%.

The Bauerfeind ViscoSpot was proven the best of all over-the-counter devices tested.

The Bauerfeind ViscoSpot was rated more effective for the initial treatment of heel pain than a custom-made polypropylene orthotic costing $300-$400.

Results showed that using the Bauerfeind ViscoSpot or other prefabricated insert along with stretching exercises was better than stretching alone or using a custom orthosis alone with stretching.

The authors concluded that, when used with a stretching program, a prefabricated shoe insert is more likely to produce improvement in symptoms as part of the initial treatment of proximal plantar fasciitis than a custom polypropylene orthotic device.