



***About your child's
Dynamic Elastomeric
Fabric Orthosis (DEFO)***

***Information for
parents and carers***

What is this leaflet for?

We have written this leaflet to explain about your child's Dynamic Elastomeric Fabric Orthosis (DEFO). We hope you find this leaflet helpful.

What is a Dynamic Elastomeric Fabric Orthosis (DEFO)?

A Dynamic Elastomeric Fabric Orthosis (DEFO) is a Lycra® garment which is snug fitting and made to measure. The DEFO helps to manage postural control and abnormal muscle tone.

When do we get a DEFO?

Your physiotherapist/occupational therapist will have discussed with you the possible benefits of a DEFO.

Once it's decided that a DEFO could help your child, we will arrange for your child to be measured. This will usually be at our clinic. Please note that it may not be your own therapist who takes your child's measurements.

Once we have your child's measurements, we send these away to the manufacturer. It then takes a few weeks for the DEFO to be made and sent back to us.

When we receive the DEFO, we will contact you to arrange an appointment. This appointment may be in the clinic or in your own home, dependent on your circumstances. At this appointment, your therapist will show you how to fit the

DEFO and give you advice on how long your child should wear it.

How do DEFOs work?

We hope that the DEFO will provide support and sensory information that will allow your child to “feel” their body, arms and/or legs more. This may then allow them to use this sensory information to learn to improve their functional ability.

Examples of functional abilities are given below (please note that these are examples – your child’s progress will depend on the issue they have and the type of DEFO prescribed for them):

Posture and mobility

For example, sitting more upright; better positioning of the head or neck; can improve symmetry (help to correct when your child leans to one side); walking can improve.

Quality of movement

Can reduce tightness and may give more movement at shoulder, elbow, wrist, thumb and fingers.

Can reduce tightness and may lead to improved movement at hip, knee and ankle.

Sensory feedback

Your child may have more awareness of their body and upper limbs.

Function

Your child may have more active spontaneous use of their trunk and upper limbs.

Will a DEFO work for my child?

Every child is different so it is difficult to predict how the DEFO will work. For example, some children don't like wearing their DEFO, whereas others make good progress.

Your therapist will set goals with you and your child that you can aim for. These goals will be reviewed regularly.

How do we use a DEFO?

First day

On the first day you have the DEFO, your child should wear it for 2 hours.

Next day and beyond

If there are no adverse reactions after the first day, then increase the next wearing time by 1 hour the next day. This will gradually be increased to the recommended wearing time over a period of weeks.

Recommended wearing time

We recommend that your child wears their DEFO for 6 hours a day, 6 days a week.

Please let your therapist know as soon as your child is wearing their garment for the recommended period of time.

How do I care for the DEFO?

Wash your DEFO at 30° using a non-biological mild detergent. Do not use fabric conditioner. Do not tumble dry, dry on a radiator or in front of the fire.

How many DEFOs do we get?

DEFOs are very expensive, highly-specialised garments, so your child will normally get one garment.

Other parents and carers have told us that they managed well with one DEFO as the garment is only worn for a few hours at a time, and as the material is quite light, the DEFO can be washed and ready to wear again in just a few hours.

What if the DEFO is damaged?

DEFOs are usually very strong garments. However, if you notice any fraying, holes or other damage, please contact your therapist for advice.

What if my child grows out of their DEFO?

As most DEFOs are only worn for a relatively short time, children don't always grow out of them. However if you think that your child's DEFO is becoming too small, please contact your therapist for advice.

Sometimes, DEFOs might not be replaced, for example if you've already achieved the goals agreed with your therapist or if the DEFO is not helping your child.

Is there anything I should watch out for?

- If your child develops a rash, becomes excessively itchy or has a flare up of an existing skin condition or allergy, remove the garment.
- If your child has history of frequent respiratory infections, the garment may affect their breathing during an infection and they should not wear it at this time.
- If your child has poor temperature control they will need close monitoring as these garments can increase core temperature by 0.5°. This is generally not considered harmful.
- If your child has just had a gastrostomy tube fitted, we usually wait for 6 to 8 months before measuring them for a DEFO. This is because most children have a major growth spurt after a gastrostomy tube is fitted.
- If your child has bladder, bowel and reflux problems, they will need close monitoring for changes in these conditions.
- If your child has contractures, you will need to monitor the skin over their joints for any increased marking.

If you are concerned about any of the above, or have any other concerns about the garment or your child, please remove the garment and contact your therapist for advice.

The garment is not for night time use.

Contact details

Therapist name:

Telephone number:

Therapist name:

Telephone number:

This leaflet is also available in large print.

Other formats and languages can be supplied on request. Please call Quality Development on (01224) 554149 for a copy. Ask for leaflet 1377.

Feedback from the public helped us to develop this leaflet. If you have any comments on how we can improve it, please call (01224) 554149 to let us know.