

# Certified Orthotists - CO(c)

## Health Professionals

Certified Orthotists CO(c) are uniquely trained professionals who provide comprehensive patient care for individuals in need of orthotic treatment. Certified Orthotists CO(c) evaluate and design solutions for patients requiring an orthosis due to muscle/bone impairment, disease or deformity. The primary goal of the CO(c) is to restore mobility and to prevent or limit disability. Prescribed orthoses can provide support to those with a wide range of neuromuscular disabilities and limit the effects of challenges resulting from birth complications such as cerebral palsy and spina bifida. Examples of orthoses include knee braces, ankle foot orthoses, upper extremity braces and spinal and neck braces. Certified Orthotists CO(c) look much deeper than the single injury or chronic ailment. They consider the underlying medical cause and resulting effects of the problem, as well as the overall health and lifestyle of the patient to help define the requirements of the orthotic treatment.

## Subject Matter Experts

Training to become a Certified Orthotist CO(c) begins with the completion of a Bachelor of Science degree, followed by two years at an accredited prosthetic and orthotic clinical program, two years in a residency program, and the successful challenge of national written, oral and practical examinations. Certified Orthotists CO(c) provide clinical assessment, technical design, fabrication, dispensing and follow up for all orthotic treatments. They are subject matter experts in all areas of orthotic treatment including lower extremity, upper extremity, spinal and other specialized orthoses.

## Holistic and Collaborative

Certified Orthotists CO(c) take a holistic approach to their patient care, analyzing the chronic problem or injury as well as the underlying cause. With a thorough understanding of the condition and patient lifestyle through physical and bio-mechanical assessment as well as gait analysis, they can then design and manufacture the most appropriate support. The CO(c) would work in collaboration with the patient's treating physician and/or therapists to ensure that other relevant clinical factors and criteria outside the realm of orthotics are appropriately considered.

## Ethically Bound

Orthotics Prosthetics Canada has a strict ethical code of conduct that all certified and registered professionals must adhere to. Breaches of this code can result in severe penalties, up to and including the loss of certification. Importantly, the profession's code of conduct prohibits the Certified Orthotist CO(c) from recommending and dispensing devices for a patient that are extraneous or would endanger the patient's safety and security:

*'The members [of the profession] must discharge their responsibilities in a fashion that will bring honour and integrity to that profession, thereby ensuring public confidence. The greatest effort possible should be made to satisfy each patient's orthotic and/or prosthetic needs.'*

Whether your orthotic requirements are the result of injury, disease or congenital problems, the Certified Orthotist CO(c) is the professional most prepared to determine the clinical needs and design the appropriate orthotic treatment.

**For further information, please visit [www.opcanada.ca](http://www.opcanada.ca)**