

daFO® Dynamics

eNewsletter of Cascade Dafo Inc.

The DAFO Toolbox

At the initial fitting, it's quite common to make minor adjustments to fine-tune the fit of a DAFO. Then, as your patient grows and changes, you may adjust again. In the summer issue of *Dafo Dynamics* we discussed several types of adjustments. This simple list of tools is what we orthotists at Cascade Dafo have found helpful when on the road, along with special requirements and sources.

Please Note: For those practitioners who have plenty of experience adjusting ankle-foot orthotics, our Cascade DAFOs use thinner plastic than traditional AFOs and need less heat to become pliable. So apply the heat gun conservatively.

Also Note: Of course, always take the DAFO off the patient's foot before adjusting it!



Joyce Chen scissors

For cutting plastic. They're actually made for cutting chicken bones, but they work great on plastic.

The extra-large handles give considerable leverage.

Most kitchen or cooking supply companies have them available.



EMT scissors

For trimming plastic. The blunt ends are good when the pointy ends of the Joyce Chen scissors may poke into padding or straps as you're working. Blades are slightly serrated, which can be good for cutting through multiple layers of material. You can order these from any medical or industrial supply company. (We use McMaster-Carr, www.mcmaster.com, 562/463-4277, but you can also get these from supply houses like SPS, www.spsco.com, and Cascade Orthopedic Supply, www.cascade-usa.com.)



Portable heat gun

For heating out plastic. If you travel to several clinics, a small portable heat gun might be just the thing. You can find these at craft stores like Michael's or JoAnn's. (They call them "embossing tools.")

Heavy-duty heat gun

Orthotists generally have heavier-duty heat guns in their clinic workshop.



Hook blade knife

For casting (cutting the cast off, in the tracks of the buffer strip) or for making precision cuts in plastic. A great tool for getting into small corners. The model we use, which comes in your casting kit if you take our DAFO casting workshop, is made by the Stanley Company. The handle is model 99E; utility blade is model 11-961.

Note: Use the hook blade (not straight blade) shape only! Be very careful because for the most control, you end up cutting toward your body. As you reach the end, be sure the knife doesn't slip free quickly. These hook blade knives are available at your local hardware store, or you can call Cascade Customer Service at 800/848-7332 to order them.



Ball-peen hammer

When heating out at specific areas or rolling edges outward, you'll need a solid, non-heat-reactive, smooth surface to press the heated plastic against. You can use an anvil, a chair leg or the edge of a walker. A ball-peen hammer is easier to wield, since you can freely bring it to the DAFO, though you sacrifice some of the leverage larger surfaces provide. Ball-peen hammers are widely available at your local hardware store.

Sandpaper, emery board, Dremel® rotary tool, cone sander, drum sander

For smoothing cut edges. Of course, if you have shop tools available, like Dremels and sanders, they are likely to be your first choice. Otherwise, hand tools like an emery board or sandpaper are good substitutes. If you heat the plastic before cutting, the end result will be fairly smooth. You may not need to refine it further.

Once you've collected these tools, you're ready to make adjustments as needed to extend functional use of your patients' DAFOs. If you have any questions about making adjustments, please call Technical Support at 800/848-7332.

-- *Loretta Sheldon*



Loretta Sheldon is an ABC Registered Orthotic Assistant, a Certified Orthotic Fitter and a member of Cascade's management team. She has been with Cascade since 1998.

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