



## Considering Custom Leg Braces

**A custom leg brace is an assistive device that can improve your quality of life. Your success in using it depends on you. Those who have been most successful using their custom leg braces have or can develop the following characteristics:**

- ▶ **Physical capability** to work with the dynamics of the brace. This needs to be assessed by your referring physician, your physical therapist and your orthotist.
- ▶ **Body-Mind Awareness** of how your body moves and be committed to changing from old patterns to new patterns of movement.
- ▶ **Tolerance for frustration**, particularly in the learning process that goes with changes in movement patterns.
- ▶ **Patience** to recognize that the longer you have had the disability, the longer it may take to change those old compensation patterns. For some, this can be a life-long learning experience.
- ▶ **Realistic goal setting** & flexibility to change goals, recognizing that desired outcomes may not be achieved perfectly, but that there will be improvements in some activities of daily living. One cannot compare personal progress or achievements to those of others.
- ▶ **Persistence**, because the process of learning to walk in a custom brace can take more time

than originally considered, including times of regression before progress. Constant practice and continued use of resources, including an orthotist, a physical therapist, and canes, walkers, and crutches, will improve the chances of success.

- ▶ **Emotional readiness**, being aware that the process of learning to use a brace or a more complex brace can trigger strong emotions. This may include revisiting emotional history, such as dealing with disability, the frustration of retraining your brain in how to move, and possible slow progress.
- ▶ **Financial awareness**, anticipating not just the initial cost, but possible additional expenses such as brace adjustments, related travel, ongoing physical therapy, and shoe modifications.

**When considering getting a custom leg brace, assess these characteristics and commitments in relation to your own personality and lifestyle in order to make an informed decision as to whether that brace is right for you.**

**Consider whether you are able make and keep the following commitments:**

- ▶ To work with a physical therapist and an orthotist regularly and over time. This includes early intervention prior to obtaining the brace.
- ▶ To establish and use a long-term support system, including family, friends, your physical therapist and your orthotist.
- ▶ To practice the recommended exercises daily and whenever possible, with feedback from the support systems. This needs to be a long-term commitment as challenges arise and circumstances change, including using a new pair of shoes.
- ▶ To return regularly to your orthotist for adjustments as changes in your body occur over time. Adjusting the brace to those changes allows it to work optimally.
- ▶ To care for and maintain your brace, including inspecting it regularly, washing it as needed and lubricating any joints.
- ▶ To take advantage of the external resources that are available—HGI web site, closed Facebook group, and networking with other custom brace wearers.