

# Walk Without Pain

## Total Ankle Replacement is on the Rise

**M**ore than 750,000 hip and knee replacements are performed every year in the United States, but now another joint is quickly becoming a candidate for replacement: the ankle. The number of total ankle replacements has more than doubled over the last few years thanks to technological advances in ankle implants as well as growing demand from aging baby boomers.

Foot and ankle specialist Kevin Lutta, MD, performs this procedure at Commonwealth Orthopaedics. “Total ankle replacement is a treatment option for advanced arthritis of the ankle,” he says. “It is recommended for patients with severe end-stage arthritis of the ankle, rheumatoid arthritis or post-traumatic arthritis of the ankle.”

Ankle arthritis occurs when ankle joint cartilage wears out, causing pain, loss of motion, swelling and difficulty walking. Total ankle replacement surgery – also called ankle arthroplasty – involves replacing the damaged ankle with a combination of metal and medical-grade plastic to both preserve range of motion and provide pain relief. During the procedure, the orthopaedic surgeon removes the arthritic bone and cartilage from the tibia (leg portion) and talus (foot portion). The implant is inserted to form a new ankle joint with a smoother motion.

Total ankle replacement was developed in the 1970s as an alternative to ankle fusion as a treatment for arthritis. Over the past 30 years, there have been many design improvements as well as advancements in the quality of the metal and plastic components. Industry breakthroughs have expanded the choice of effective implants, as well. In the late 1990s, only one ankle prosthesis was FDA approved in the U.S. Today, surgeons can select from four FDA-approved prostheses.

Total ankle replacement relieves pain, restores normal gait and improves quality of life. “There are many studies that show very good results and high patient satisfaction when performed in the right patient,” Dr. Lutta says.



*Kevin C. Lutta, MD, graduated with a BA in Biology from Clark University. He earned his medical degree from Howard University College of Medicine, where he was named to Alpha Omega Alpha Medical Honor Society. He completed his residency in orthopaedic surgery at Howard University Hospital and went on to a fellowship in foot and ankle reconstruction at Pennsylvania Hospital, part of the University of Pennsylvania Health System.*

*For full biographies and a complete directory of the physicians at Commonwealth Orthopaedics who perform these and other procedures visit our website at [www.c-o-r.com](http://www.c-o-r.com).*

## Orthotist Service

### Improves the Patient Experience

#### What is an orthotist?

An orthotist is a healthcare professional specially educated and trained to manage comprehensive orthotic patient care. This includes patient assessment, formulation and implementation of a treatment plan, follow-up and practice management. At Commonwealth, the orthotist works directly with the prescribing physician to treat and meet a patient's custom foot orthotic needs.

#### What services are provided for Commonwealth patients?

The orthotist evaluates a patient's foot and gait (walking pattern) to determine the best type of custom orthotic device necessary for the best outcome. This usually includes taking a mold of the foot and having a custom device fabricated.

#### Are orthotists certified?

Yes. Orthotists are certified by the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, which is accredited by the Institute for Credentialing Excellence.

#### Where is the program located?

The orthotics program is based at Commonwealth's Herndon office two days a week. It also travels to meet patients at our Fairfax, Arlington and Springfield offices one day per week.

#### What are the advantages of having an orthotist on staff?

Commonwealth is committed to ensuring the best patient experience possible. This program is another way we make our services seamless and convenient. Patients don't have to travel to multiple locations to get the orthotic care they need. Commonwealth physicians refer their patients directly to the program; all billing and insurance information is already in the system. The pricing is competitive, and sometimes better, than similar services in the area.