

Durable Medical Equipment Information

Durable Medical Equipment (DME) is medical equipment or supplies that support a specific medical need, or provide a preventative or assistive purpose, and are intended for more than one-time use. In the sports medicine and athletics setting, DME includes bracing, splinting, padding, and ambulatory aids.

Sports often require specific movements and can put unique stresses on the body. Over time, those stressors can lead to overuse injury or strain that can result in injury and affect sports performance.

DME and bracing can serve various functions for both student-athletes and the general population:

- Help stabilize, protect, and/or support joints throughout the body
- Provide immobilization following an acute, new injury
- Reduce occurrence and/or severity of acute or ongoing, chronic injuries in sports
- Aid/support/assist with biomechanical or congenital dysfunction
- Improve posture and biomechanical efficiency of the body during movement, which can help improve sports performance



Helpful Info on Common Types of DME Used Within Athletics

Bracing

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| Ankles | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Styles with straps and/or laces provide more support and more closely replicate taping• Some styles have more rigid or semi-rigid supports on the sides, commonly utilized in volleyball and/or post-injury; type per athlete can vary based on the support/stability needed |
| Knees | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Various styles exist, some with designated areas and supports for the kneecap and some with built-in side supports• Some models are all-metal styles used preventatively and post-surgically |
| Shoulder | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Usually used post-injury; straps may be used to apply specific support to the joint• Padding may be utilized to help protect certain areas |
| Elbow | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wide range of padding, tendon straps, sleeves, etc.; more rigid bracing used post injury |
| Wrist | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Styles can vary; range of motion and preferences may vary based on sport-specific needs• More restricting when used post-injury to protect injured areas/structure |

Other Common DME Items

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| Crutches | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Used with various lower extremity injuries to protect, reduce pain, and aid in movement• Proper fit/height is important; healthcare providers can provide info on technique for use |
| Slings | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports the shoulder/arm during acute injuries and/or post-surgically• Important to ensure fits on the arm/shoulder in a relaxed but supported position |
| Knee Immobilizers | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Used to limit the motion of the knee post-injury or post-surgery• Important to ensure that it is centered around the kneecap and range limited as needed |

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| Walking Boots | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often ordered by an orthopedic physician but may also be issued by an urgent care facility or athletic trainer to protect the lower extremity • May be directed to use either while weight-bearing or non-weight-bearing • Often allows for strengthening/rehab exercises to be performed as indicated • Encourage wearing a sock or sleeve to help with fit, sweat, rubbing/sliding in the boot |
| Knee Scooters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rolling device that can be helpful for ankle and foot injuries • Requires kneeling on knee/leg therefore it may not work for all lower extremity injuries • Commonly used for longer periods of non-weight-bearing • Can be rented for use over a specific period from some DME companies |
| Shoe Wear / Insoles / Orthotics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoes play an important role in setting the body up for biomechanical success and stability; additional customization and support can be achieved with insoles or orthotics. • Arch support, shock absorption, and general fit of shoe wear is important for both everyday shoes as well as shoe wear worn during sports • Typically, a cash-pay product, not covered by insurance, except for some custom orthotics • Encourage visiting a reputable running store or shoe store where you can ask questions and be evaluated for the best fit, type of shoe, and insole/support recommendations |
| Compression Sleeves | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compression sleeves can help with swelling and provide neuromuscular sensory feedback to the area underneath • Sleeves should be snug and compressive to the targeted body part without causing pain or a loss of circulation • Typically a cash-pay product, not covered by insurance |
| Myofascial | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various types and styles of soft tissue and trigger point mobilization tools, some battery-powered, that can be utilized to help release tight areas in muscles throughout the body • Tools include foam rollers, muscle roller sticks, and trigger point balls, etc. |

Common Sports Medicine Bracing & DME Brands: Active Ankle, Bauerfeind, Bledsoe, Breg, Cramer, DonJoy, Incrediwear, Med Spec, Mueller, Össur

For athletes who utilize well-fitted prophylactic/preventative or post-injury bracing when appropriate, the DME/bracing allows the athlete to prepare for practice or competition efficiently and consistently, especially during off-season training and/or at away games if an athletic trainer is not as readily available.

Bracing also provides an athlete the ability to adjust the brace mid-practice or mid-game more rapidly than utilizing taping methods of support and maintains its overall support as compared to athletic tape which can lose its original level of support over time due to moisture and stretch.

No DME or brace utilized for protection can guarantee prevention of injury or re-injury, however they can help to mitigate risk and/or severity of injury.

Some DME is covered by insurance plans when prescribed by a doctor, however, many items are cash-pay, or considered over the counter products, such as preventative-use commercially available braces and sleeves.

Andrews Institute athletic trainers can help you explore options and ensure you get the proper sizing of DME. Athletic trainers will still provide taping when deemed appropriate in cases of acute injury or preventative need, however, they will also let you know when DME would be beneficial for you or your student-athlete.

Andrews Institute Sports Medicine Outreach periodically receives donations of lightly used braces, boots, crutches, and various other DMEs that can be loaned out to student-athletes for aid when needed.

- See an Andrews Institute athletic trainer with any questions about our Crutches for Kids and Recycle for Rehab programs.

Reach out to an Andrews Institute athletic trainer or physician provider with questions or to get connected with the Andrews DME Coordinator for further assistance.

