

Ankle Braces for Post-Polio Leg Pains

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Greg Ramme is 52 with a history of mild weakness in his legs since developing vaccine-related paralytic polio in 1964 at age 3. He learned to walk with bilateral long-leg braces and crutches and used them until age 8 when his legs had become strong enough to walk well. After high school he studied mechanics and worked for more than 25 years as a diesel mechanic. He enjoyed many active hobbies, including fishing and hunting, around his home in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

At age 43, he still enjoyed frequent Nordic skiing for 10 to 12 kilometers. When he was 45, Greg developed numbness in his legs over a short period of time and began to notice gradual weakening and pain after exercise of his leg muscles.

At 49, he was diagnosed with lumbar spinal stenosis and received decompressive laminectomy surgery. After post-operative physical therapy, he was able to walk without a limp, but his leg muscle strength was only a grade of 4 to 4+ on the right and 4 to 4- on the left, which represents mild weakness.

Greg retired at age 50 on disability. In spite of further physical therapy, stretching exercises and massage therapy, he had to take pain medication and was frustrated by not being able to walk very far without more leg pains and by being unable to enjoy hobbies or sleep well because of leg muscle pains.

After evaluation by doctors and therapists at a Post-Polio and Wellness Retreat in Big Bay, Michigan, bilateral lightweight “partial ground-reaction force” ankle foot orthoses¹ were recommended. Their purpose was to assist his functional, but weakening, leg muscles that had chronic overuse pains.



Greg Ramme holding one of his braces. "Without PHI's help I would not have been able to get my braces. The braces were the extra assistance I needed, and I am very grateful to have them."

Because he had lost his health insurance and was not yet eligible for Medicare, he applied for financial assistance from PHI's Joyce and Arthur Siegfried Memorial Fund. He received the maximum amount of \$800, which covered about half of the cost for his two braces, and he was able to obtain them a few months after they were recommended.

After using them for two months, he reports that he is mostly pain free at last and off regular pain medication. He wears the braces all day, not walking more than a quarter mile without resting, does stretching exercises, takes frequent hot baths and receives weekly leg-muscle massages from a friend who is a massage therapist. ■

Reference

1. Ottobock WalkOn® model of AFO

PHI administers the Joyce and Arthur Siegfried Memorial Fund. Polio survivors living in Missouri can apply for funds from the Gilbert Goldenhersh Memorial Tribute Fund for bracing and modified shoes. Email Brian Tiburzi at info@post-polio.org for an application for either Fund. The maximum amount given per applicant is \$800.