

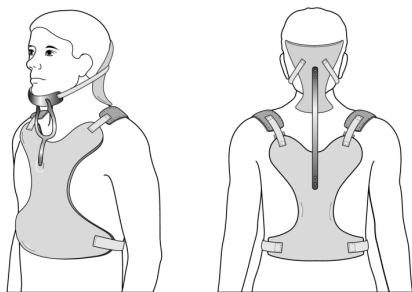
## Using Your CTO at Home

### Purpose of the CTO

Your CTO (Cervical-Thoracic Orthosis) is used to treat fractures in the cervical spine (neck) and the upper part of the thoracic spine (upper back). It maintains the head in a neutral position, reduces pain, prevents further injury and promotes healing.

### Wearing your CTO

Your CTO has a front and back piece with shoulder straps. There is a strap around the lower rib cage and two straps that connect the back headpiece to the front chin rest. You should be able to do many most things by yourself or with a little help.



Talk with your healthcare team about your daily routine. It is advised that you wear the CTO over a T-shirt for comfort and to protect your skin.

### Heading Home

You will need someone to drive you home. Your neck will not bend (flex) to get into a small car. Try to arrange a ride in a car with plenty of head room (large sedans, SUVs, vans, etc). It is helpful if it has seats that recline. You **cannot** drive while wearing a CTO brace and you may **not** remove the brace to drive.

### Taking off the CTO for Bathing

You must wear your CTO brace as ordered by your doctor. You will need help getting in and out of the brace for bathing. To remove brace, have someone loosen the straps over the shoulders and around the lower ribs. Hold the chin piece (which should still be attached to the back head piece) in place while you are log rolled onto your side. Loosen the chin straps and lift the back piece off. While on your side, have someone wash and dry your back and change the removable pads on the brace if needed.

**Do not** bend or twist when your brace is off or loose! Have someone place the back portion of the brace against your head and back. Log roll back to a flat position. Remain lying flat and have someone help you remove the front piece. Wash and dry your skin. Have someone replace the pads on the brace with fresh ones. You can now put back on the front piece of the brace and connect to the straps of the back piece. Hand wash and air dry any dirty pads you removed from the brace.

**To learn how put on and take off your brace, watch:**

#### CTO Brace Video



<https://uwhealth-public.wistia.com/medias/i9kqu4ar15>

#### Minerva CTO Brace Video



<https://uwhealth-public.wistia.com/medias/bz4wbn5o9b>

## Shaving

It is best to have help when you shave. It is a habit to move your head and neck while shaving. For years, you may have tilted your head back to shave your neck. You must **not** do that now. Remove CTO as above and shave while lying flat. Someone may need to help you shave, focus on keeping your head still and not moving your neck. Your helper could also help hold your head still while you shave lying down.

## Daily Activities

- Eating and drinking will be awkward at first. You can't look down at your plate or tilt your head back to drink. To help, use a straw to drink. Raise your table or use a low chair to get your plate as high as possible. Tuck a napkin or towel under your chin (between chin and pad and over chest piece) to catch spills.
- Shirts that button are easier to get on and off.
- Use caution when going downstairs as you cannot easily look down. Stand at the top of the stairs, **hold** the handrail, and bend at the waist to look down to make sure your path is clear. You will be top-heavy, so be careful bending. **Hold** the handrail at all times when going downstairs.
- Be careful when walking on uneven or icy surfaces. Sidewalks may have sudden changes.
- In the hospital, remind visitors to come up to the head of your bed. Visitors may not realize that you can't turn your head to look at them and you can't see them at the foot of the bed.

## Length of Wearing CTO

Your doctor will decide how long you need to wear your CTO brace based on your injuries. Please follow the timeline set up by your provider. It is important that you wear your CTO brace even if you feel better. Your doctor will see you for follow up care. Call if your CTO brace needs to be adjusted.

## If the CTO brace needs adjustments call:

UW Health Orthotics Clinic

**(608) 263-0583**

## When to Call

If you have more numbness, tingling, pain, are less able to move or do daily activities, call your clinic. Call **911** if you have sudden onset of weakness, loss of bowel or bladder control.

## Who to Call

Neurosurgery Clinic

**(608) 263-7502**

Orthopedic Rehabilitation Spine Clinic

**(608) 265-3207**

After hours, nights, weekends, and holidays call **(608) 262-2122**. This will give you the paging operator. Ask for the resident on call for your clinic. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

If you live out of the area, please call **1-800-323-8942** and ask for your clinic.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 8/2024 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#6831.