

Using Your Cervical Orthosis at Home (PMT and/or Philadelphia)

Purpose of the Cervical Orthosis

Your cervical orthosis (brace) helps you to control your neck posture, reduce pain, prevent further injury, and promote healing.

Wearing Your Brace

Your brace should reduce or prevent unwanted motion in your neck. By changing your movements (i.e. turning your head and chest together in the direction you want to look), you should be able to do many normal activities. Ask your doctor for exact guidelines or restrictions.



Philadelphia Collar



PMT Collar

Getting Ready for Your Trip Home

Arrange for someone to drive you. Bend at your hip and knees to keep your head, neck and back straight when getting into and out of a car.

Taking Off and Putting on Your Brace

To learn how to put on and take off your brace, scan the QR code below to watch the cervical brace video. Scan the QR code or visit patient.uwhealth.org/cervical-collar to watch the instructional video.



You will need help to remove the collar. You must be lying flat. Your helper should undo the Velcro straps and remove the front of the collar. Once the front of the collar is off, you must keep your head and neck still. Your helper should change the front pads before removing the back of the collar. Your helper should help you keep your head still while gently sliding the back of the collar out from behind your head. Your helper can then change the back pads and slide the collar back into place while holding your head still. Your orthotist and/or therapist will show you how to do this. The back piece overlaps the front of the PMT collar.

Bathing

If your doctor says you can shower, you must wear your collar. If you were fitted with a collar before you came to the hospital, or in the ER, and still have it (a beige-colored collar known as a "Philadelphia Collar"), you can wear it to shower. It is made of closed-cell foam that does not absorb water. Change back to your regular collar after the shower.

You will have two sets of pads. If you shower in the PMT collar, change to a dry set of pads after your shower. Change the pads one at a time to avoid being confused about which pad goes where.

Sleeping in the Brace

Most patients wear the brace full time, taking it off only at the end of treatment. Your doctor will tell you if you can take off your brace while lying down. Your doctor may change the instructions at any point during your treatment.

Cleaning the Outside of the Brace

Wipe off the outside with a damp or soapy cloth, and then dry. The straps can air dry while the brace is being worn.

Cleaning the Inside of the Brace

Remove the pads that are attached by Velcro. Put in a new or clean set of pads. Wash the soiled pads in mild soap, rinse well, and air dry. Do not leave them to soak. Do not use heat to dry them.

Shaving

If you shave your face, have someone help you shave. You often move your head and neck while shaving. You must not do that now. Remove the collar and shave while lying flat. If someone else shaves you, you can focus on keeping your head still. Your helper can also help to hold your head still.

Daily Activities

Eating and drinking will be awkward at first, as you can't look down at your plate or tilt your head back to drink. Use a straw to drink, raise your table or use a low chair to raise your plate. Tuck a napkin or towel under your chin to catch spills.

Tips

- Shirts that button are easier to get on and off than t-shirts.
- Use caution when going downstairs, as you can't look down. Stand at the top of the stairs, hold the handrail, and bend at the waist to look down the stairs to make sure your path is clear. Always hold the handrail.
- You also need to be careful when walking on any uneven surface. Be very careful if it may be icy, since you may not be able to see a patch of ice.

- While you are here in the hospital and in bed, ask visitors to come up to the head of the bed to talk to you. They may not know that you can't turn your head to look at them or see them when they are at the foot of the bed.

How long do I need to wear the brace?

Your doctor will decide how long you need to wear your brace. You must follow your doctor's advice even if you feel better and would like to stop wearing it sooner. Your doctor will check your progress and will decide what is in your best long-term interest.

When to Call

If you need adjustments to your cervical collar, new pads or have concerns about the collar, call the Orthotics Clinic.

If you have more numbness, tingling, pain or are less able to move or do daily activities, call your doctor.

Who to Call

Orthotics Clinic
(608) 263-0583

Neurosurgery Clinic
(608) 263-1410

Spine Clinic
(608) 265-3207

After hours, this will give you the paging operator. Ask for the resident on call for your clinic. Leave your name and number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

The toll-free number is **1-800-323-8942**.

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 © 5/2023 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#5409.