

Cervical Collar: What You Need To Know

The following information is not for the soft, foam cervical collars which are worn only when needed.

Cervical Collar

You need to wear a cervical collar to protect and support your head and neck after an injury or surgery. The collar will keep your neck in the proper position to heal.

Your collar should fit firmly but it should not cause pain. Make sure your chin is at the front edge of the chin piece. The back of the collar should be centered and straight.

Wearing the Cervical Collar

Keeping your head and neck in proper alignment is important to your recovery. Your doctor will give you a schedule. Follow your doctor's instructions.

In general, you will wear the collar when you are up and out of bed. You may need to wear it when you take a shower.

You should avoid strenuous activity (such as exercising, running, or any activity that puts strain or stress on your neck) and heavy lifting.

Putting On the Collar

You will need to put your collar on while lying down. Follow all specific directions you receive from your doctor.

- Gather all of your supplies:
 - neck collar
 - washcloth
 - towel
 - clean pads
 - mirror
 - shaver.
- Shave, if needed. Wash your neck and face with a mild soap and warm water.
- Once a day, change the pads inside the collar. Peel them off the Velcro® dots.
- Put in clean pads. Put the gray side grips on the Velcro dots. The new pads should cover all edges of the hard plastic.
- Lie flat on your back.
- Hold the front panel of the collar with one hand. Center the back panel with your other hand.
- Attach the Velcro straps to the front of the collar. The straps should be of equal length.
- You may need help.
- Remember to lie flat on your back while your collar is removed for changing pads or for skin care.

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Caring for Your Skin

- Check your skin every day. Look for sores or red marks. If you have redness, it should go away in a few minutes after taking off the collar.
- Keep your skin clean and dry.
- Do not use lotions, powders, oils, ointments or creams on your neck.
- Men should be clean shaven so the facial hair doesn't irritate the neck.
- Take a shower with the collar on.

Cleaning Your Pads and Collar

- Hand wash the pads with mild soap and warm water. Rinse the pads well, gently squeeze, and lay flat to air dry.
- Clean the hard plastic part of the collar with soap and warm water. Dry with a clean towel.

When To Call Your Regular Doctor

Call your doctor if you have sudden neck pain or if you feel numbness or tingling in your arms or legs.

When To Call Your Orthotist

The orthotist will help you if you are having problems with the collar. It is important that you don't try to fix or change the collar. You can cause further damage to your neck.

Call your orthotist if:

- you have red areas or pressure sores from the collar (caused by pressure or rubbing on your skin)
- the collar is too tight or too loose due to weight gain or loss
- the Velcro straps no longer work
- you need more pads
- you have questions or concerns.