

Back Brace: What You Need to Know

Why You Need a Back Brace

You need to wear a back brace to protect and support your spine. The brace will help prevent you from re-injuring your back by lifting, bending or twisting.

Types of Back Braces

There are two types of back braces:

- **TLSO** (thoracic lumbar sacral orthosis): This is a plastic, molded spinal brace. It should tightly fit over your back, chest and hips (similar to a cast). The brace has holes for airflow to help keep you cool.
- **Corset:** The corset is made of fabric and soft elastic material. It has rigid metal or plastic inserts to provide support. This brace should fit tightly around your low back and stomach. A large strap crosses your stomach and smaller cord straps on each side help you adjust brace tightness.

How to Wear Your Back Brace

It is important to keep your spine in proper alignment.

- Wear your back brace as directed by your health care provider.
- Take your brace off to shower.
- When your brace is off you should lie flat unless your health care provider tells you something else.

How to Put on Your Back Brace

To put on your TLSO brace:

- Lie down, place the brace beside you.
- Do a logroll from side to side into the brace. Make sure the waist grooves are in the right position. (See your “Understanding Your Spine Surgery” book)
- Secure the straps. Start with the middle strap. Make sure your brace does not twist.

To put on your corset brace:

- Lie down. Slide the brace under your low back.
- Bring the two sides of the brace around your stomach and secure the Velcro® strap.
- Pull the cord straps (one on each side) and secure them so your brace is snug but not too tight.

Getting Out of Bed

- To get out of bed, roll to one side.
- Let your legs dangle over the side of your bed.
- Push yourself up with your arms.
- Make sure your brace does not twist or move.
- Adjust the cord straps after standing if needed.

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To Remove Your Back Brace

- Lie down on your bed.
- Loosen all straps.
- Do a logroll from side to side. Slide your brace out from under your body.
- Lie flat while your brace is off.

Caring for Your Skin

It is important to keep your skin healthy under your brace.

- Check your skin every day. Look for sores or red marks.
- Keep your skin clean and dry.
- Apply witchhazel with brisk, gentle movements until dry. Apply as needed to keep your skin clean and to help prevent skin breakdown.
- Do not use lotions, powders, oils and ointments near your incision.

Cleaning Your Brace

- Clean your brace as needed. A good time to clean your brace is in the evening before you go to bed.
- Use a mild soap and water.
- Be sure to dry the brace well before wearing it again or let it air dry while you lie down.

When to Call Your Surgeon

Call your surgeon's office if you:

- have sudden, severe back pain
- feel numbness or tingling in your arms or legs.

When to Call Your Orthotist

Call your orthotist if:

- you develop redness, pressure areas or sores under your brace
- the brace is too tight or too loose
- the brace straps no longer work
- you have questions or concerns.