

NHS Lothian

**Royal Infirmary of
Edinburgh**

Instructions for Wearing your Cervical Collar



Purpose of the collar

Following the injury to your neck/spine the collar helps limit movement and provides stability while your injury heals.

Continue wearing the collar as instructed until this is reviewed, and the plan adjusted by your medical team.

Your healthcare provider will complete the table below.

You need to put the collar on when lying down: Yes / No

You can put the collar on in sitting: Yes / No

You are required to wear the collar at all times (including when sitting up): Yes / No

You will need to sleep with the collar on: Yes / No

You need to wear the collar for a period of up to ____ weeks, unless advised otherwise at your fracture clinic follow up.

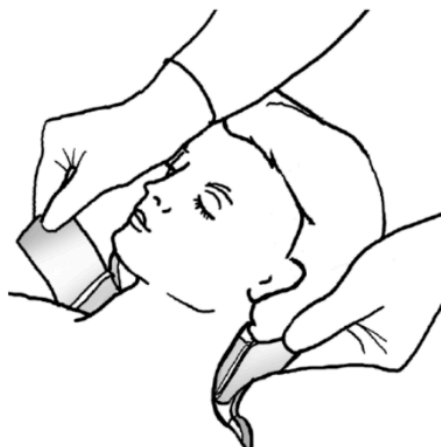
Changing the collar when lying down

You will need another person/s to help with this.

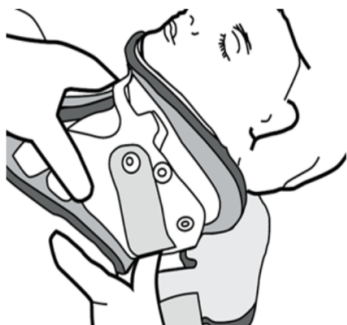
1. You need to lie flat on your bed, keeping your head in a “neutral” position and looking straight up. You may need to remove pillows to achieve this.

2. With the head held still, undo the straps on each side of the collar and remove the front panel. Gently slide the back panel away from the back of the neck by pulling it sideways towards one shoulder.

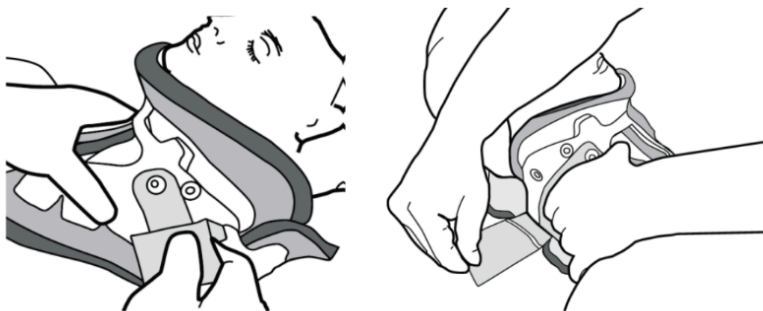
3. To re-apply, position the back panel under the crevice of the neck. Push down on the back panel and push it under the neck until the Velcro straps are at the same position on each side.



4. Position the front panel: Place the centre of the front panel in line with the centre of the chin, so that the chin pad is lying flush with the tip of the chin. The front panel should be snug at the sides of the neck.



5. Attaching the front panel to the back panel: While holding the front panel firmly with one hand, attach the velcro straps on each side. The back panel straps will overlap onto the front panel velcro pads.



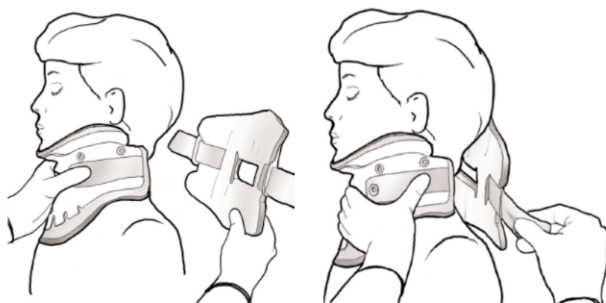
6. Ensure the front panel is not pressing into the throat and adjust accordingly.

7. Final checks: your chin should be flush with end of the chin pad and your nose and chin should be in a straight line through the centre of the collar at the front. There should be no plastic parts of the collar in contact with your skin. The collar should be tight but comfortable.

Changing the collar in sitting

The collar can be applied either independently or with the assistance of another person. Your healthcare provider will advise you on this.

1. Sit upright, keeping your head still and pointing forwards.
2. Gently undo the velcro straps and remove the front and back panel.
3. To re-apply, place the front panel of the collar directly under your chin, ensuring the chin pad is lying flush with the tip of the chin.
4. Whilst holding the front of the collar firmly with one hand, centre the back panel and attach both velcro straps to the front and panel velcro pads.
5. Ensure the front panel is not pressing into the throat and adjust accordingly.
6. Final checks: your chin should be flush with the end of the chin pad and your nose and chin should be in a straight line through the centre of the collar at the front. There should be no plastic parts of the collar in contact with your skin. The collar should be tight but comfortable.



Skin checks and collar care instructions

Skin checks and collar care is needed to keep the skin clean and to prevent pressure sores or ulcers. This can either be done independently or with the assistance of another person. Your healthcare provider will advise you on this and should be done as follows:

- 1.** Remove the collar and inspect the skin at least once a day, particularly at the bony prominences. The usual pressure points are chin, collar bone, ear lobes and back of the head.
- 2.** Maintain hygiene under the collar. Clean the skin under the collar daily, wash with warm soapy water and dry thoroughly. Do not apply powder or lotions.
- 3.** It is not advisable to attempt to shower during the time period you are required to wear your collar. Your collar should be kept as dry as possible during washing. You can wash around your collar. It is helpful to protect the collar from splashes of water by using a plastic bag or towel.

Removing the lining pads from the collar

When you leave hospital, you should have a spare set of soft collar lining pads. You will need to clean and change the lining pads if they become soiled or wet. The set of lining pads that are taken off should be hand washed in warm soapy water and left to air dry.

Remove lining pads from the front and back panels. Take care to note how you remove the pads as the spare set of lining pads will need to be reapplied to the same areas.

Considerations while wearing a collar

- The collar will restrict your ability to move freely and see your feet. Take care when walking and when going down the stairs.
- Occasionally eating, drinking and swallowing may be compromised due to the position of the head and neck. You might find chewing difficult if the collar restricts the movement of your jaw. Chopping food well before eating and adding sauces to soften food can help. Sit as upright as possible when eating and drinking. If you are concerned about coughing or choking, a speech and language therapist may be required. This can be arranged by your nurse if you are in hospital, or by your GP if you are at home.
- Remove things that may cause you to fall, such as rugs and electrical cords.
- You should not be carrying out any activities which involve any heavy lifting, pushing/pulling of objects. The collar restricts your movement making some activities more difficult.

Driving:

You must not drive while wearing your collar as this will inhibit your ability to rotate your neck and see the road. You must contact the DVLA to discuss this further and/or discuss with your consultant at your fracture clinic appointment. You should also check with your insurance company before you return to driving.

As a driver, it is your responsibility to make sure that you are in control of the vehicle at all times.

You can contact the DVLA at www.gov.uk or Tel: 0300 790 6806

Return to work:

Your type of work will impact on your ability to return to work with a collar on. Return to work should be discussed with your consultant and your workplace. If your injury has caused you work related difficulties, seek advice from an Occupational Health service.

When should I call for help?

Please seek immediate medical help if you experience any of the following:

- Severe neck pain
- Weakness, tingling or loss of feeling in your face, arms or legs
- Loss of bowel or bladder function

If you experience any of the following:

- Broken skin areas/ pressure sores
- The collar is damaged in anyway

Please contact your local district nursing team. If you have not been referred to your local district nurse and are doing your own collar care, then please speak to Outpatient Department 7 at the Royal Infirmary Campus (Mon-Fri 8am-6pm, 0131 312 1708).