

MGH Cervical Spine Patient Education Handout

General Information

Your doctor has recommended you wear a neck brace, or "cervical collar", due to a neck injury or surgery.

Your doctor recommends the following cervical collar:

- Aspen Collar
 Vista Collar
 Other: _____

This collar should be worn:


- For comfort This means you may take your collar off when laying in bed, sitting, showering or during other activities as long as it does not cause an increase in pain
 At all times This means you must wear your collar both in and out of bed and during all activities

Precautions

Your doctor has given you other precautions, or things you should avoid, to allow your neck to heal:

- Do not twist or bend your neck. This is why you have the neck brace, or cervical collar
- Do not lift, push, or pull anything heavier than a gallon of milk (about 8 pounds)
- Do not drive until cleared by your doctor

Collar Management

Type of Collar	Instructions
Aspen Collar: 	Putting an Aspen Cervical Collar on: 1. Sit in front of a mirror, keeping your head & neck as still and straight as possible. 2. Apply the front piece of the collar first and hold it in place. 3. While holding the front piece in place secure the back panel by attaching the straps from the back panel to each side of the front panel. The back piece of the collar should overlap the front piece of the collar. 4. Another technique for removing the collar & putting it back on is to unstrap only one side of the collar when you need to remove it. Then you only have one strap to Velcro back in place when you put the collar on. Aspen Collar Padding: You may receive an extra set of pads to be used when original set of pads becomes wet from showering, or soiled from perspiration, food, etc. Pads may be washed in the sink with soap & water. Do not place in dryer. Allow pads to fully air dry prior to replacing into your collar.

Vista Collar:



Putting a Vista Neck Collar on:

1. A trained medical personnel will utilize the yellow dial on the front of the collar to adjust the collar height to fit your neck. Once this is set - you should NOT use the dial again to change the height.
2. Stand in front of a mirror and try to keep your head and neck as straight as possible.
3. Apply the front piece of the collar first and hold it in place.
4. While holding the front piece in place secure the back panel by attaching the straps from the back panel to each side of the front panel. The back piece of the collar should overlap the front piece of the collar.
5. Another technique for removing the collar & putting it back on is to unstrap only one side of the collar when you need to remove it. Then you only have one strap to Velcro back in place when you put the collar on.

Vista Collar Padding



This extra set of pads is used when original set of pads becomes wet from showering, or soiled from perspiration, food, etc. Pads may be washed in the sink with soap & water. Do not place in dryer. Allow pads to fully air dry prior to replacing into your collar.

Philadelphia Collar:



You may be given a Philadelphia Collar to be used as a second collar, just for showering. If possible, have a second person available to help remove & replace your neck brace to make sure your neck stays still & in the correct position the entire time.

Putting a Philadelphia Collar on:

1. Sit in front of a mirror and try to keep your head and neck as straight as possible.
2. Apply the back piece of the collar first and hold it in place.
3. While holding the back piece in place secure the front panel by attaching the straps from the back panel to each side of the front panel. The front piece of the collar should overlap the back piece of the collar.
4. Another technique for removing the collar & putting it back on is to unstrap only one side of the collar when you need to remove it. Then you only have one strap to Velcro back in place when you put the collar on.

How do I know my collar is on correctly?

1. The Velcro straps should be even on both sides.
2. No plastic should touch any part of your skin.
3. All slack between the front and back panels must be removed to ensure a secure fit.
4. Your chin should be centered on the chin pad. Chin should rest fully on the front of the collar.
5. Pay attention to the position of the back panel; make sure that it is centered on the back of your neck.

Self-care with a collar

Activity	Instructions
Hygiene and bathing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to keep the skin on your neck and your neck brace clean. • Pads should be changed and washed if they become moist or have an odor. Wet or moist pads should not be left in contact with your skin. • If it's difficult to reach parts of your body to thoroughly wash, your OT may suggest a different way to bathe or use a long-handled bath sponge. • If you are unsteady on your feet, you may consider using a shower chair to help prevent falling.
Shaving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If possible, you should have a second person available to help you shave so that you can focus on keeping your neck in the correct position the entire time. • An electric razor is easier than a straight razor. • You may carefully remove the front piece of the collar for shaving. Keep the back piece of collar on to make sure neck remains still. • Stand in front of a mirror to do this and keep your head and neck as still and straight as possible. • When you are done, dry your face and chin thoroughly and replace the collar.
Dressing	<p>Upper Body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Button or zip front shirts may be the easiest to wear. • With pull-over shirts, pick shirts that are loose-fitting and have a wide neck (such as a "V" neck t-shirt) that can be stretched out to fit over the collar. • If you have difficulty with buttoning or zipping, your OT will show you different ways or special equipment to help fasten clothing. <p>Lower Body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crossing your legs to bring your foot onto your knee may make it easier for you to dress your lower body. • If it is difficult to put on pants, underwear, socks, or shoes, your OT can provide you with special equipment to make dressing easier.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elastic waist pants may be easier than pants with zippers, buttons, or snaps. - Slip-on supportive shoes may be easier than shoes with laces.
Managing your home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No heavy lifting, pushing, or pulling anything heavier than a gallon of milk (about 8 pounds). This includes heavy items like grocery & garbage bags, vacuums, laundry baskets, children, and pets. • A reacher may be helpful to pick up items off the floor or overhead. • Place frequently used items in the kitchen, bathroom, and living room within easy reach to avoid bending down or reaching overhead. • Cook easily prepared meals and avoid heavy pots and pans.
Community activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving: Do not drive until cleared by your doctor. • Walking: Be careful when crossing streets. Since you are unable to turn your neck, you will need to turn your whole body to check for on-coming cars. In grocery stores or malls, be careful to look for unexpected hazards that may be difficult to see with the neck brace, such as "Wet Floor" signs, uneven floor surfaces, and small children. Always take your time and hold onto stair or escalator railings. • It is normal to feel very fatigued following an injury or surgery. This will improve with time. Allow yourself extra time to get things done and accept help from family or friends who offer.