Halo Ring and Vest Brace

You have dislocated or broken the bones (vertebrae) in your neck. A halo is placed to hold your head and the bones of your neck in a fixed position, so your neck can heal.

There are two parts to the halo:

- The top part is called the halo ring. It fits around your head. The halo ring is held in place by pins that fit into the bones in your head. The doctor will numb the areas in your head where the pins are placed. You will feel pressure while the pins are being placed. You may have some soreness for 1 to 3 days.

- The halo ring is attached to the bottom part called the halo vest. The vest fits over your chest.

It takes about 1 hour to have the halo placed. You will wear the halo for about 12 weeks.

There are tools taped to the front of the vest. Do not remove. They are used to remove the brace in case of an emergency.

Your Care

Wear a cotton t-shirt or tank under the vest next to your skin to avoid skin irritation. Cut the shirt along the side seam from the neck to the hem to allow the shirt to be put on under the halo. A t-shirt or tank that is 1 to 2 sizes larger is best, so the sides can be overlapped to protect your skin. The halo vest should keep the shirt in place.

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Learn more about your health care.

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**Pin site care:**
- Use cotton swabs such as Q-tips with soap and water to clean the skin around the pins one time each day. Do not use ointments, first aid creams or antiseptics unless told by your doctor. These creams promote healing of the skin around the pins. If this skin heals, it could cause discomfort when the halo is removed.
- You will need someone to shampoo your hair. Do not get the vest wet. Do not use tints, dyes or sprays on your hair while wearing the halo.
- **Call the doctor right away if you have:**
  - Red or inflamed pin sites
  - Pus-like drainage (yellow-green)
  - Shifting or movement of the pins
- If you lose or gain weight, the halo vest may need to be adjusted for a good fit. Call the halo company to make needed changes. Their name and phone number is on the front of the vest.

**Skin Care:**
- You can wash in the bathtub, but keep the water line below the level of your vest.
- You will need someone to help you inspect your skin and wash under the halo vest each day. Do not use soap, lotion or powder under the vest. They irritate the skin.

**Follow these steps:**

1. Turn onto your side.
2. Your helper should loosen the straps on one side by your waist and then pull the vest open. **Do not** loosen the shoulder strap. Push the t-shirt out of the way or remove it.
3. Inspect the skin under the vest. Look for redness or irritation.
4. Wash the area with plain water and dry the area completely.
5. Close the waist straps, checking that the straps are in the correct holes.
6. Roll to the opposite side, loosen the waist straps and pull the vest open. **Do not** loosen the shoulder strap. Remove the t-shirt if you have not already.

7. Inspect the skin under the vest. Look for redness or irritation.

8. Wash the area with plain water and dry the area completely. Put on a clean shirt and smooth the shirt under the vest. Close the waist straps, making sure that the straps are in the correct holes.

9. Adjust the shirt as needed to ensure the skin is covered under the vest. If needed, roll to the opposite side, loosen the waist straps and pull the vest open to smooth out the shirt. Close the waist straps again.

**Clothing:**
- Blouses or shirts that are 1 to 2 sizes larger fit over the vest.
- To keep warm in cold weather, wear a large winter coat or a cape and wrap a scarf around your neck and ears.

**Activity:**
- Be as active as you want to be and do your normal activities.
- Be careful getting in and out of the car. Larger cars are easier to get into. Back into the car then put your head down and swing in. Reverse the process to get out of the car. **Do not drive** and always wear your seat belt.
- You may need to bend over slightly when going under doorways.
- Depending on your job, you may or may not be able to work. Check with your doctor if you have questions or concerns.
You can travel and fly in an airplane. The metal detectors will alarm when you pass through them.

- Do not lift heavy objects.
- Do not jump or run.
- Do not ride a bicycle because your balance will be off.
- Avoid crowds of people where you might get shoved.
- If your neck hurts after any activity, stop and rest.
- Ask your doctor about sexual activity.
- Do not use sharp objects to scratch the skin under the vest.

Sleep:

- Sleep in any position that is comfortable. A pillow or rolled towel under your neck may be used.
- You may feel more tired during the day, so short naps may help.
- To get out of bed, roll over on your side near the edge of the bed. Drop your legs off the bed and push up with your arms and hands at the same time. Do not allow anyone to pull or move you by pulling on the brace.

When to Call the Doctor

Call the doctor if you have:

- Continuing neck pain
- Any changes in the feeling in your arms or legs
- Any changes in moving your arms and legs
- Reddened or broken skin under or around the vest
What if an emergency occurs?

- If a cardiac arrest occurs, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) can be done by releasing both side buckles and lifting the front of the vest.
- Always keep the tools taped to the front of the vest. Do not remove the brace for any reason except an emergency.

When will the halo be removed?

- The doctor will do x-rays to determine when your neck is healed. When it is healed, the doctor will remove the halo in the office. You can use band-aids over the pin sites if needed.
- Your head will feel heavy on your shoulders after the halo is removed. The neck muscles have not had to work for several weeks.
- You may be fitted for a soft collar to help support your neck.
- Continue to limit your activities after the halo is removed. The doctor will tell you when you can be more active. It will take several weeks before you feel normal. However, you will feel better each day.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.