Wearing a Cervical Collar

Wearing a Cervical Collar

Limit motion of your neck and upper spine to help healing

You are to wear a cervical collar to limit motion to allow healing of your neck or upper spine. How long you need to wear the collar will depend on your injury. Be sure to follow your doctor’s orders about wearing the collar.

The collar should be removed at least 1 time each day to clean it. When the collar is removed, clean and check the skin underneath for any sign of irritation from the collar. Then it should go right back on.

When the collar is off, keep your neck as straight as you can. Do not turn or bend your neck.

Collar is fit well if:

- You are not able to slide your chin inside the collar, and your chin does not go over the edge of the collar.
- The lower edge of the collar is not resting on your collar bones or digging into your shoulders.

Parts of the collar

Your collar is in 2 pieces. There is a front piece and a back piece that is held in place by Velcro straps. The word “Front” is printed on the plastic on 1 piece and the word “Back” is printed on the other, so you can tell them apart. There are also arrows on the plastic to show which edge should be up.

Your therapist may mark the ends of the straps on the plastic, or you can mark the ends with a pen or marker. That will make it easier to put the straps back in nearly the same position each time.

The plastic pieces have pads attached with Velcro strips. The pads will need to be cleaned each day. You will be given a set of replacement pads with your collar.

If you need extra pads, check with a medical supply store to see if they may have them. You can also call the manufacturer at 800-257-8440 to find out where you can get an extra set.

General care tips

- Do not use any powder or lotion on your skin under the collar. Powder or lotion can ruin the pads.
- Keep your skin clean and dry under and around the collar. Wash your neck and chin with mild soap and water. Rinse and dry well.
- No plastic is touching your skin. Only the blue pads should touch your skin.
• Be sure to check your skin each day for any red, sore, or irritated spots. Your caregiver may need to help you with this. Call your doctor, nurse, or therapist if you see any spots.
• When you are lying on your back, the bed should be flat with no pillows under your head. Rest your arms at your sides and keep your head centered with your body, not bent or turned.

**Putting the collar on**

Help may be needed to put the collar on, or you may be able to do it yourself.

If you have long hair or a beard, be sure the hair is pulled up and outside of the collar.

1. Lie on your back.
2. Without bending or turning your neck, roll on your side. **Keep your head and neck in line with your trunk while you roll.**
3. Your caregiver should put the back piece of the collar behind your neck, so it is centered.
4. Roll back onto your back, keeping your head and neck in line with your trunk.

5. Your caregiver should hold the front part of the collar on the sides and slide the collar up, so it rests under your chin. The sides of the collar front should be up off of the collar bones, angled toward your ears.
6. Curl the front of the collar around your neck, so the ends fit inside the back piece of the collar. Secure the Velcro straps on each side to the marks. If the strap ends are not marked, tighten one side and then the other, so the straps are equal in length on both sides. The Velcro straps are to be blue on blue, so they line up with the blue strips on the front collar piece. This helps keep the collar parts fit together at the correct angle.

7. The collar should be a snug fit. You should not be able to move your head.
Bathing

Clean and check your skin each day to be sure you have no signs of redness, irritation, or open sores. Your collar and pads should also be cleaned each day.

If the collar is to be removed while you are in bed:
1. Your caregiver should loosen the strap on one side while you are resting on your back.
2. With your head and neck resting on the back piece of the collar, your caregiver can clean and dry your neck and chin. **Check the skin for signs of irritation.**
3. Remove the pads from the front piece and wipe the plastic off if dirty, and then dry it well.
4. Place the clean pads on the front piece of the collar.
5. Replace the front collar piece under your chin and secure the strap.
6. With the collar secure, roll onto your side with a small towel roll to keep your head from tilting to the side.
7. Your caregiver can loosen the strap and pull the back part of the collar away from the neck. Your head and neck are resting on the front piece of the collar.
8. Wash the back of the neck and dry well. Be sure to **check the skin for signs of irritation.**
9. Change 1 pad at a time to avoid getting them mixed up. Remove a pad. Wipe the plastic off if dirty, and then dry it well. Place a clean pad on the collar piece. Replace the other pad in the same way.
10. Place the back piece of the collar around the neck, so the side of the back piece overlaps the side of the front piece. Secure the strap.
Hand-held shower

You cannot wear the Miami J collar in the direct stream of water in a shower. This is to prevent soaking the brace and weakening the Velcro strap connections.

You can bathe using a hand-held shower while wearing a different cervical collar, called a Philadelphia collar. This collar is a cloth and foam collar that has Velcro straps to hold it in place. It will hold your head and reduce your neck motion while you shower.

Putting on the Philadelphia collar:

1. If you have long hair or a beard, be sure the hair is pulled up and outside of the collar.
2. Lie on your back.
3. Without bending or turning your neck, roll on your side. **Keep your head and neck in line with your trunk while you roll.**
4. Your caregiver should put the back piece of the collar behind your neck, so it is centered.
5. Roll back onto your back, keeping your head and neck in line with your trunk.
6. Your caregiver can wrap the collar around your neck, under your chin and secure the Velcro straps.

After your shower:

1. Lie on your back and roll onto your side with a small towel roll under your head.
2. Your caregiver should loosen the Velcro straps and pull the collar away from your neck. Dry the skin with a clean towel.
3. Place the back piece of the Miami J collar behind your neck, so it is centered.
4. Roll back onto your back, keeping your head and neck in line with your trunk.
5. Be sure the skin on the front and sides of your neck is dry. Proceed with Steps 5, 6 and 7 under “Putting the collar on” on page 2.
6. Lay the Philadelphia collar out flat to dry.

Care and cleaning of collar and pads

Keep the collar and skin under it clean and dry to prevent skin breakdown.

**Pads should be changed at least every day,** and more often if they are wet or dirty. You should have an extra set of pads for your collar, so you can wash and dry a set while wearing the others. Use only mild soap and water to clean the pads.

1. Wash the pads in the sink or a basin of water with soap. Squeeze the pads to work the soap through the pad.
2. Rinse the pads well with clean water. Squeeze the pads in the clean water to be sure to rinse out the soap.
3. Squeeze out any extra water.
4. Lay the pads flat to dry. The pads should air dry in about an hour.
It is best to replace the pads 1 at a time, so you do not get the pads mixed up.

1. Peel the soiled pad off of the Velcro strips that hold it in place.
2. Fold the clean pad in half with the dull side out and center the pad in the plastic collar piece.
3. Unfold the pad and press it in place on the Velcro strips. The shiny side of the pad goes against the skin.
4. Adjust the pad as needed to be sure the pads are the only part that will touch the skin, not the plastic.

**Clean the plastic pieces of your collar at least 1 time each week**, or anytime it is dirty.

- Do not use any bleach or detergents.
- Wipe the plastic with a cloth or paper towel wet with water and mild soap.
- Rinse well with clean water.
- Dry with a clean towel. Be sure the plastic is dry before placing the pads.

**Extra pads**

You should have an extra set of pads that come with your cervical collar. If you need extra pads, check first with a medical supply store to see if they have them. You can also call the manufacturer at 800-257-8440 to find out where you can get an extra set.