

Aspen Cervical Orthosis

Quick Reference:

Wear your Aspen collar:

- until your Spine Physician says you can stop wearing it.
- at all times (including at night when sleeping, when getting up to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night, and when in the shower).
- only during the day when you are up and out of bed (including when getting up to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night, and when in the shower).
- when sleeping, wear your Soft Collar.
- put the Aspen collar on and take it off when you are lying flat on the bed.
- put the Aspen collar on and take it off when you are in a sitting position.
- if you have been instructed to wear your collar 'at all times' you may remove it once per day to change the liners and inspect and wash your skin. You must do this in a lying down position and you must keep your spine in a neutral alignment (that means keeping your head and neck in a straight line).



Fitting the Collar

Your Occupational Therapist will fit the collar on you. Once it has been sized, do not make any changes. If it is not fitting comfortably, ask for your Occupational Therapist to check the fit as he/she may be able to make small adjustments. When you no longer require the collar, you may donate it to the Occupational Therapy Department. Your collar will be recycled.

Wearing the Collar

The Aspen collar is used to help stabilise your neck after injury or surgery. It helps to hold your spinal column in good alignment during the healing process.

On average, most people wear the collar for 6-12 weeks. You will be told how long you need to wear your collar based on your unique situation; only your spine physician may tell you when you can stop wearing the collar.

You will be taught how to put your collar on and take it off independently (and how to care for it in general). If you are unable to manage your collar independently, a friend or family member will be taught how to help you.

Applying and Removing the Collar

Keep your collar at your bedside so that you can easily reach it without getting up.

Put the back of the collar on first, then the front.

When you put on and take off the collar, you must remember to use the techniques taught to you by your therapists, and you must remember to keep your spine in a neutral alignment (that means keeping your head and neck in a straight line).

Back –

1. Fold the Velcro strap over the foam pad.
2. While keeping your head still, slide the back panel under you until it is centred under your neck. If needed, you may roll onto your side the way you were taught by your therapist.
3. Align the back panel so that each Velcro strap is centred between the top of your shoulders and bottom of your ears.
4. On each side, the end of the Velcro strap should come around to the front the same distance.

Front –

1. Flare the sides of the collar outward.
2. Place the chin piece directly under the tip of the chin (the chin should not extend beyond the edge of the plastic).
3. With one hand, firmly hold the collar in place and push each side over your shoulders and around your neck. Make sure that the back edges are tucked in and lay flat against your neck.
4. Pull each Velcro strap (of the rear panel) forward and attach it to the front of the collar. This holds the front of the collar in place so your hands are free to re-adjust and snug up each side.
5. To snug the collar, use one hand to firmly hold the front of the collar at the front cutout. With the other hand, undo the Velcro by pulling the strap straight out to the side until the slack is removed. Pull the Velcro strap up and forward and reattach it to the front of the collar. Repeat this on the other side. Check to make sure the front panel is even and has not been pulled out of midline.
6. The front of the collar should not be in contact with your throat.
7. Reverse the procedure to remove the collar.

Adjusting the Collar When Up –

1. Once you are up, check the overall positioning and alignment of the collar in a mirror.
2. If an adjustment is needed, you may release and reattach the straps but only one strap at a time.

Occiput Support Strap –

- The occiput support strap shapes that back of the collar so that it better fits the base of your skull to give you more comfort and support.
- To tighten the support strap, squeeze the back panel with one hand; loosen the strap (on one side only) and pull until it is snug and comfortable; reconnect the strap to the Velcro.
- To loosen the support strap, detach the strap from the Velcro (on one side only) and allow the back of the collar to “spring open.”
- Only have the strap tightened when you are up and about; loosen the strap when you will be lying down in the brace for long periods of time.

Checking the Fit –

When the collar has been properly applied:

- Your head and neck should be in a neutral position (that means in a straight line).
- Your chin should come to the front edge of the chin piece.
- The back edge of the chin piece should not be pressing into your throat.
- The printed wording of the back panel should be upright.
- The front and back panels should appear level and symmetrical.
- When checking the fit, think to yourself “comfortable yet snug.”

Watch the On-Line Video!

The Aspen Medical Company has provided an on-line video that reviews how to put on and take off the collar.

1. Go to: www.aspenmp.com.
2. Click on: Products
3. Under the title Collar, click on: Video
4. Click on: Inservice Training Video

Please note that there may be small differences between the Aspen training video and the teaching you received in the hospital. Always follow the teaching provided by the health care staff that took care of you.

Washing/Skin Care

Pressure, moisture, heat and dirt can lead to redness and soreness of your skin. To avoid skin breakdown, keep your skin clean, dry, and cool. If you notice redness (that remains even after the collar has been off for 10-15 minutes) or skin breakdown, call your family doctor.

At least once a day, remove the collar and wash your face and neck. At this time, change the pads for clean ones and wash the dirty ones. If you have been instructed to wear your collar at all times, you may remove it once daily to clean the collar, change the pads, and wash your skin.

1. Before taking off your collar, gather the supplies you will need by your bedside: a washbasin, soap, washcloth, dry towels, and the clean replacement pads.
2. Remove the collar the way you were taught by your therapist. Unless your physician or therapist has given you other instructions, you must do this while laying flat on the bed.
3. While you wash, keep your head and neck straight and still. If needed, you may roll onto your side in the way you were taught to do so by your therapist.
4. Put your collar back on before you get up off the bed.

In addition to washing at your face and neck, you may shower. You must wear the collar in the shower. When you are finished, clean your neck and face as described above. Clean the collar and replace the pads as described below.

Note – if you have had surgery and have an incision, before you shower, make sure you are aware of any restrictions or conditions related to incision care. This is very important; your nurse will teach you or a family member what you need to do to take proper care of your incision.

Cleaning the Collar

Pads may be cleaned daily. Change the pads if they become visibly soiled, have an odour, or if they become moist. You will be provided with an extra set of pads. Hand-wash the pads in the sink with warm water and the same soap (or other product) you use to clean your face. Rinse thoroughly and squeeze the pads between towels to remove all excess water. Let the pads air-dry (about 6-8 hours). Never use bleach on the pads or put the pads in the washer or dryer. The plastic portion of the collar may be washed with mild soap and water. Rinse and towel dry the collar before re-attaching the clean pads.

Removing/Replacing the Pads

Front pads –

Remove: Simply peel the pads off the Velcro dots.

Replace: Fold the pads in half and attach them so the grey side grips the Velcro dots; the white side goes against your skin. Attach the pads to the centre Velcro dot first and then unfold each side. The plastic edges of the collar should not touch your skin; position the pads to make sure they overlap all the plastic edges.

The two pads should not overlap each other. When reattaching them, lay them next to each other so they fit together like pieces of a puzzle - side by side.

Back pad –

Remove: Pull the straps out of the plastic slots. Remove the pads by simply peeling them off the Velcro dots.

Replace: Attach the pad to the central Velcro dots and then unfold each side. Pull each strap through the holes of the pad, lay them over the padding, and feed them through the plastic slots.

Payment

You will receive a bill from the hospital's Financial Services Department for the cost of the collar(s). If you have extended health benefits or other income support, you may be eligible for partial or full reimbursement. Please pay the hospital bill and then submit the receipt for review by your extended health benefits or other income support provider.

Program/Unit of Origin: The Department of Occupational Therapy, VGH
and Orthotics Department, G.F. Strong Centre

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