

Cervical Soft Collar

Quick Reference:

Wear your soft collar:

- until your Spine Physician says you can stop wearing it.
- for comfort - that is, as much as you think you need it.
- all day when you are up and out of bed (including when getting up to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night).
- at all times (including at night when sleeping, when getting up to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night).
- put the soft collar on and take it off when you are lying flat on the bed.
- put the soft collar on and take it off when you are in a sitting position.



Fitting the Collar

A member of your health care team will fit your collar on you. If it is not fitting comfortably, ask for a team member to check the fit as he/she may be able to make small adjustments.

Wearing the Collar

The soft collar is used to help support your neck after injury or surgery. It is not meant to fully limit movement; rather it helps you to hold your spinal column in a good position during the healing process and reduces the amount of movement you might otherwise have.

On average, most people wear the soft collar for 1–6 weeks. In some cases, it may be necessary to wear your soft collar for a longer time. 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.

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).

Before you start, make sure that the ‘dip’ in the collar is on the top; the dip is the front of the collar and sits under your chin. The Velcro straps go around to the back of your neck.

- While keeping your head still, place the ‘dip’ of the collar under your chin and against your throat. The top, inside edge of the collar should sit at the place where your chin meets your neck.
- Slide each side of the collar around the back of your neck to attach the Velcro. If needed, you may roll onto your side the way you were taught by your therapist.
- The collar should be snug enough to be in contact with your neck all the way around.

Adjusting the Collar When Up –

1. Once you are up, check the overall fit of the collar in a mirror.
2. If an adjustment is needed, you may release and reattach the strap, but you must hold your head and neck in a straight line.

Checking the Fit –

When the collar has been properly fit:

- Your head and neck should be in a neutral position (that means in a straight line).
- The collar should be in contact with your neck all the way around.
- The top, inside edge of the collar should sit at the place where your chin meets your neck.
- Your chin should come out over the top of the collar.
- When checking the fit, think to yourself “comfortable yet snug.”

Washing/Skin Care

Pressure, moisture, heat and dirt can cause 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, take off the collar and wash your face and neck. At this time, change the cover for a clean one (and wash the dirty one later). If you have been told to wear your collar at all times, you may remove it once a day to clean the collar, change the cover, and wash your skin.

1. Before taking off your collar, get the supplies you will need and put them by your bedside: a washbasin, soap, washcloth, dry towels, and the clean replacement cover.
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 in a straight line and keep them still. If needed, you may roll onto your side in the way you were taught 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 may wear the collar in the shower. Avoid getting the collar wet by wrapping it with cling plastic film (except for the Velcro portion). When you are finished, clean your neck and face as described above.

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. In general, you may not get your incision wet for 3 days after surgery.

Cleaning the Collar

The cover may be cleaned daily. Change the cover if it becomes soiled, has an odour, or if it becomes moist. You will be provided with an extra liner. Hand-wash the liner in the sink with warm water and the same soap (or other product) you use to clean your face. Rinse it well and squeeze the liner between towels to remove all the water. Let the liner air-dry (about 6–8 hours).

If needed, occasionally you can place the entire soft collar in the washing machine (use regular laundry soap but do not add bleach) and dryer. It is not recommended to do this on a frequent basis as the collar may become damaged by too much vigorous washing and drying.

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 receive partial or full repayment. Please pay the hospital bill and then send the receipt to your extended health benefits or other income support provider for review.

Program/Unit of Origin: The Department of Occupational Therapy, VGH

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