

Managing Cervical Collar While Seated or Standing

A cervical collar provides support and restricts movement in your neck while bones and tissues heal in the area where you had surgery.

The Aspen collar is plastic with front and back panels lined with removable padding. It provides comfort and keeps sweat away from your skin. Openings on the front and the back panel of the collar allow your skin to breathe.

HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO WEAR THE ASPEN COLLAR?

Your surgeon will tell you how long you should wear the collar. You will likely have a follow-up appointment with your Provider in two to four weeks and he/she will let you know how much longer you need to wear your collar.

MAY I TAKE THE COLLAR OFF AND PUT IT ON BY MYSELF?

Yes—you may take the collar off to change the pads while you are standing or sitting in front of a mirror. If a family member will be available daily or every other day, the occupational therapist can train your family member to help you with changing the collar pads.

HOW TO TAKE CERVICAL COLLAR OFF

1. Position yourself in front of a mirror (seated or standing).
2. Unfasten one side of the collar straps.
3. Remove the collar with the other side still attached by the collar strap.
4. Next, undo the other strap on the collar to separate the front and back panel of the collar.

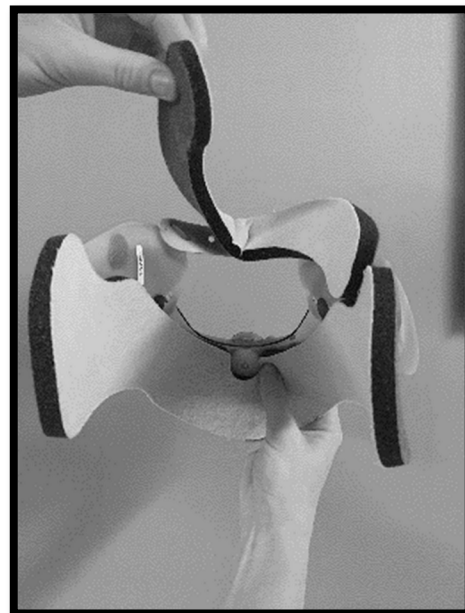


HOW TO CHANGE THE PADS:

(Try to limit how much you move your head while your collar is off. Holding out the collar in front of you while changing the pads may help you do this.)

Front of Cervical Collar:

1. Remove dirty chin pad. Place clean pad (white side up) on center Velcro dot then two side dots. Make sure the pad lines up with the front of the plastic chin piece.
2. Remove dirty chest pad. Place clean pad (white side up) so notch on pad fits around raised plastic circle.
3. Make sure the two pads touch, much like a puzzle piece, so there is no plastic showing.



Back of Cervical Collar:

1. Remove strap from far side slots (one on each side). Do not remove strap from other slots. Pull off the pad.
2. Place clean pad (white side up) centered on plastic piece. Make sure the triangle cut out of the pad is upright and “VISTA” is upright on the straps.
3. Put the strap through the hole in the pad (one on each side) and secure through far side slots. Pull tight.



HOW TO WASH THE PADS:

Use gentle soap and water to hand wash the foam pads in the sink. Rinse and leave on a clean table to air-dry. (Pads will dry overnight.) Change the pads every 1 – 2 days or sooner if soiled. Do not wash the pads in the washer or dry them in the dryer—this will ruin them! You will be discharged from the hospital with one extra set of pads.

HOW TO PUT CERVICAL COLLAR ON:

1. Reattach the front and back panels on one side using the collar strap.
2. Bring the front panel of the collar to your neck and place it under your chin. Make sure to keep your neck in a neutral position (looking straight ahead).
3. Bring the back panel around your neck and secure the strap on the other side of the collar.

4. Pull the strap securely on each side, making sure the collar fits snugly and securely. Make sure the back piece overlaps the front piece. Your head should feel supported and the straps should be pulled evenly. You should be able to fit 2 fingers (no more) between your chin or chest and the cervical collar. Back piece should be in the middle of your neck.



HOW TO ADJUST YOUR CERVICAL COLLAR HEIGHT:

Your medical team should set the proper chin height for your collar. You should not adjust this without medical assistance. Proper height allows you to comfortably rest your chin in collar while keeping head in a normal position (not looking up or down)

BATHING:

On the day of discharge, your nurse or Provider will tell you when you can shower. He/she will also let you know if you can remove your collar while in the shower. Use the “dirty” pads while in the shower, as these will become wet with bathing. After bathing and drying, follow the directions above for removing the cervical collar, exchanging the wet/dirty pads for dry ones, and putting the collar back on.

DRESSING:

You can remove your collar for putting on a shirt. It may be easier to wear button-up shirts, shirts with wide necks, or V-necks. Sitting down while dressing is safest and most convenient.

SHAVING:

It may be easier to use a facial electric shaver during your recovery. Try to limit moving your head during activity.

WHEN EATING:

Your Provider will tell you if you can remove your collar for eating. If wearing collar, tuck a cloth or napkin between your chin and the collar to keep the collar from getting dirty.

DRIVING:

You should not drive while wearing your cervical collar.

REMEMBER:

- Keep your skin clean and dry.
- If your pads are wet or dirty, pads should be changed.
- You should not be able to move your head from side to side or up and down in the collar. Avoid quick movements
- Do not lift more than 5-10 pounds or do activities that require your arms to be over your head for long periods of time.
- A desktop computer is better for your neck than using a laptop because the screen is at eye level.
- Check for redness or skin irritation when changing your pads. Contact your Provider if sore or blister develops