

Royal North Shore Hospital

Orthotics Department

Occupational Therapy Department

Physiotherapy Department

Acute Care



Cervical Collar: Guidelines

Patient and Carer Information Booklet

If you have any further questions regarding the content of this booklet please contact your:

Orthotist: Phone 02 9463 2303
Occupational Therapist: Phone 02 9462 9666
Physiotherapist: Phone 02 9462 9747



Health
Northern Sydney
Local Health District

Cervical Collar (Neck Collar)

Purpose of the Cervical Collar:

The Cervical Collar is prescribed to wear after spinal injury or surgery.

The collar does three things:

1. Immobilises your spine during healing
2. Stabilises and restricts movement in injured areas
3. Controls pain by restricting movement

Your cervical collar (Miami-J or Aspen) is to be worn at all times.

The only exception is during showers where a Philadelphia collar will be worn.

You need to wear your collar for as long as your consultant has instructed.

Precautions:

Do not:

- Try to twist your neck
- Sit, stand up or walk around without your collar
- Do activities that strain or put pressure on your neck
- Lift medium to heavy weight objects (more than 2kgs)

Sleeping:

You may have some difficulty getting into a comfortable position for sleeping initially. You may also tire more quickly and need naps during the day.

- You must sleep on your back and lay flat on bed unless your consultant has said otherwise.
- Do not use a pillow unless told otherwise by your Orthotist or Physiotherapist.
- Use a folded towel (usually approximately 1 inch in thickness) underneath your head instead.
- You may find a pillow under your knees relaxing if you are lying on your back.



Getting In and Out of Bed:

To get out of bed:

- Bend outside knee
- Bring arms toward the edge of the bed
- Keep your hip and shoulders in line as you roll onto your side.
- Move your legs off the bed
- Push up through your arms into a sitting position

Keep your spine and neck straight and do not twist your body as you roll.

To get into bed, reverse this process:

- Sit on the bed, with your bottom as far back as possible
- Lean down onto your elbow
- Lower your shoulder onto the bed
- Lift both legs off the floor onto the bed
- Roll over onto your back with both knees bent

Keep your spine and neck straight and do not twist your body as you roll

Sitting:

What to look for in a good chair:

- Adjustable height or high enough so that your hips are in line with your knees
- Firm and supportive seat. Avoid soft couches
- Armrests

Avoid sitting for long periods of time. Change your position regularly.

Showering:

- Your consultant will advise if you can change into the Philadelphia collar
- The Philadelphia collar is cream-coloured
- Your Physiotherapist/Orthotist will show you and/or a family member how to change your collar

If you are allowed to shower with a waterproof Philadelphia collar on:

- Have a relative or carer help you to change your collar
- Do not shower without a collar on
- Consider using a shower chair for safety
- Dry your skin thoroughly after your shower
- Change from the Philadelphia Collar back to your Miami J or Aspen collar as soon as possible to avoid skin irritation

If you are not allowed to shower with a waterproof Philadelphia collar on:

- You may still shower with the Miami J or Aspen collar as long as you have a hand held shower hose to wash from armpits down OR sponge bathe.



Philadelphia Collar: Images courtesy of Ossur Australia- Philadelphia Collar

Pressure Injury Prevention

A pressure injury is an injury to the skin caused by unrelieved pressure and may occur when you are unable to move due to injury or surgery. They may develop under or around braces or from being in the same position for too long.

Signs of a pressure injury:

- Redness / skin discoloration
- Tenderness, pain, or itching in affected areas
- Blistering
- Broken skin

Reducing the risk of pressure injury:

- Check your skin daily for red areas
- Change collar liners daily or when they are wet. Your orthotist will provide a spare set of liners before your discharge from hospital.
- Do not use talcum powder underneath your brace. Talcum powder may irritate your skin.
- Make sure your skin is dry before applying collars

If the areas of redness do not go away and you have increasing discomfort please notify your Orthotist on (02) 9463 2303 to have your collar reviewed.

Miami J Liner Change Procedure and Interchanging Collars:

It is important to maintain good hygiene in the collar to protect your skin. Miami J or Aspen Collar liners should be changed daily.

Change your Miami J/ Aspen Collar Liners when you change into your Philadelphia Collar for showering.

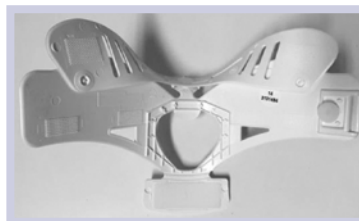
Steps:

1. Have a family or carer help with liner changes
2. Have the 3 liner pieces ready (shown in photos)
3. Change the liners one at a time
4. The fluffy side of the liner sits against the velcro, shiny side against the skin
5. Make sure the liners are symmetrical and overlap the plastic by 1 – 2cm

Hand wash liners with mild soapy water and lay flat to dry. Do not use the washing machine or dryer. Make sure the liners are completely dry before use to prevent pressure areas and other skin problems.

Goals when reapplying collar:

Make sure the Velcro straps are firm and symmetrical.



Grooming:

- Shave facial hair when you are changing between the Miami J and Philadelphia collar
- Do not move your head when shaving
- Keep your collar on at all times including brushing your teeth

Dressing:

- Wear loose fitting clothing. E.g. Button-up shirts
- The collar should sit under your clothing
- Wear sensible non-slip shoes

Transport/Driving:

You are not allowed to drive for the duration of brace use.

How to get into the car:

- Ensure the seat is pushed back and reclined
- Bend at your hips and knees, lower your bottom onto the seat
- Swing your legs into the car
- Plan regular breaks if you are travelling for more than 30 minutes

NB: Refer to the Austroads Fitness to Drive guidelines or ask your Occupational Therapist or Consultant for further driving instructions.

Lifting:

Discuss your maximum lifting tolerance with your consultant

Avoid lifting items more than 2kgs. Have assistance with 'heavier' tasks such as:

- Shopping
- Carrying pots and pans and other kitchen appliances
- Vacuuming, mopping
- Laundry
- Gardening
- Child care – do not lift children

Tip: Break up groceries or laundry into smaller loads by taking more frequent trips



2L Milk = 2kg

Work:

- Plan your return carefully: look at your job requirements and ask if there are lighter duties
- Maintain all driving and lifting restrictions
- Set up your work place area to allow good posture and comfort
- Take regular breaks
- Talk to your Occupational Therapist for further discussion on returning to work

Sex:

Ask your consultant when you can return to sexual activity. Avoid postures that put strain on your neck. You may need to assume a more passive role for a time. If you have concerns or have increasing pain, ask your consultant.

Exercise:

The best exercise during your recovery is walking. Increase your distance daily, guided by your level of fatigue and your physiotherapist.

Collar adjustments:

- Adjustments are made by the Orthotists. Do not make any adjustments yourself

Video Link:

For ongoing tips on how to interchange collars please refer to our allied health video link:

Lying: <https://youtu.be/vSmDrACb5Jw>

Sitting: <https://youtu.be/6Rqa-QfecOQ>

Please note you will require clearance by your consultant to interchange collars in a seated position

Further Questions:

If you have any further questions, please ask your Orthotist, Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist and refer to the video.

You can contact an Interpreter using the Translations Interpreter Service - TIS (free call) on 131 450

Checklist of Education / Training Prior to Discharge

I understand my movement precautions

I understand how I am allowed to change my collar (this is determined by your surgeon):

I require assistance to change my collar

I can change my collar sitting up

I require my collar to be changed lying flat

I am not allowed to change my collar

My carer and I both feel confident with applying and removing the brace in the correct manner

I understand how to check for and prevent pressure areas

I understand how to change and wash my liners

I am able to get in and out of bed independently

I understand how to shower, toilet and dress whilst requiring my collar

I understand that when sleeping in bed I am to lay flat on my back using folded up towels rather than pillows underneath neck to achieve best neck alignment

I am aware on how to access a video-link for ongoing care tips

Thank you to all participants who have allowed the use of their images in the production of this booklet

