

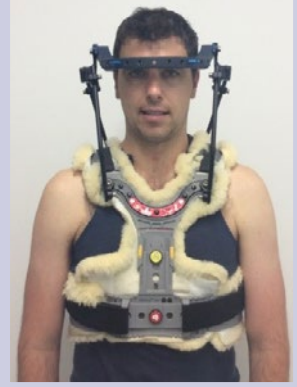
## Royal North Shore Hospital

Orthotics Department

Occupational Therapy Department

Physiotherapy Department

Acute Care



# Halo: 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

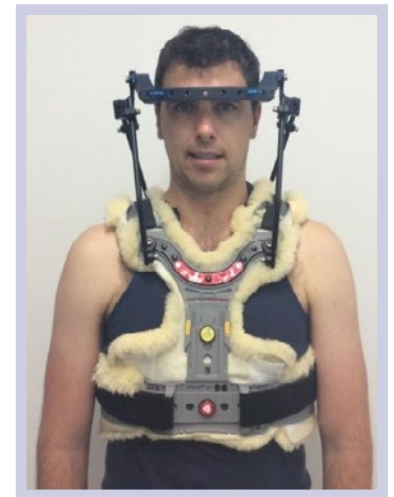
Physiotherapist: Phone 02 9462 9747



**Health**  
Northern Sydney  
Local Health District

*\*For emergencies please contact your Orthotist or present to Emergency*

# Halo (Halo Thoracic Spinal Orthosis)



## Purpose of the Halo:

The Halo provides maximum stability to a neck injury.

The HALO sits directly on the skin and the ring anchors onto the skull

The Halo does three things:

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

You need to wear the brace for as long as the consultant has instructed.

## Patient Experience

It is normal to experience headaches or pressure on the skull. This is usually fade after the first day

The HALO can be heavy - it will take time to adjust to the brace

It is quite common to experience headaches or pressure on the skull. This will usually fade after the first day. If this is ongoing or unbearable please alert nursing staff. The HALO can be heavy. It is likely you will need time to adjust to the brace.

## Precautions:

### Do NOT:

- Twist or bend your back
- Sit for longer than 30-40 minutes
- Lift objects that weigh greater than 2kgs or 4 pounds (e.g. 2L of milk)
- Avoid pushing and pulling (e.g. pushing a shopping trolley)
- Perform activities that strain or put pressure on your neck
- Adjust your brace

### Do:

- Sit in a firm, high chair with suitable back support

## 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

- We advise you to sleep in a position that does not put pressure on the HALO ring. Increased pressure may cause pin site loosening
- Using a folded towel (usually approximately 1 inch in thickness) underneath your head may help for comfort
- 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

Remember to keep your spine and neck straight and do not twist your body as you roll

### To get into bed, reverse this process:

- Sit back on the bed, with your bottom as far back as possible
- Lean to the side and lower your trunk to the bed
- Lift both legs off the floor onto the bed
- Roll over onto your back with both knees bent

Remember to keep your spine and neck straight and do not twist your body as you roll



### 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
- Keep your skin dry
- Do not use talcum powder underneath your brace. Talcum powder may irritate your skin
- Wearing a singlet with Velcro shoulder straps under your brace. The singlet can then be removed, washed and reapplied easily without moving the HALO. Your Orthotist will train you how to do this safely

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 Halo reviewed.

## Pin Site Hygiene:

How to clean pin sites:

- Have cotton-tips and betadine solution ready
- Clean pin sites daily with mild soapy water to clear out dead skin or discharge
- Keep hair around the pin sites trimmed short
- Check the skin around the pin sites for redness or inflammation. Do NOT touch pin sites with fingers as this can lead to infection.
- Apply a small amount of betadine solution to each pin site using a cotton-tip all around the pin.
- Use a new cotton-tip for each pin site to avoid infection.
- You will need help with pin-site cleaning – do not do this alone.

## Showering:

- Do NOT shower in the brace. Wet liners will irritate your skin
- Bed bath or sponge bath only when in this brace. You will need someone to help you.
- Use baby wipes or a damp cloth to clean around your upper body
- You will have fortnightly outpatient appointments with your Orthotist for liner changes. Contact Orthotics (9463 2303) to arrange an appointment upon discharge

## Grooming:

- Try and keep the hair directly around the pins sites trimmed short. This will help stop dead skin from being trapped /infected and prevent clogged hair and skin from obstructing cleaning of skin around the pin sites

## Dressing:

- Wear loose fitting clothing. For example button-up shirts
- The HALO fits underneath your clothing
- Wear sensible non-slip shoes
- A Singlet with Velcro shoulder straps may be worn under the brace for hygiene purposes

## 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**

## Transport:

You are not allowed to drive with your HALO brace.

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.



## 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.

## MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) Precautions:

- An MRI can be used whilst wearing a Halo. The carbon composite superstructure allows the scan to be carried out. X-rays can also be carried out without compromising neck stability
- Please ensure no Allen keys or other metal tools or modifications are attached to the Halo vest when having an MRI
- Your Halo will be rated to either 1.5 Tesla (titanium ring pins) or 3 Tesla (ceramic ring pins)

### **Reviewing the Halo:**

All adjustments will be made by your Orthotist. Do not make any adjustments yourself.

**Contact your orthotist as soon as possible if you experience any of the following issues:**

- skin irritation
- excessive skull pressure or pain
- redness/inflammation of a pin site
- loosening of a pin or loosening of any other part of the Halo
- a pin has a clicking sensation
- numbness or weakness in the arms or legs
- sudden back pain

### **Halo Maintenance:**

You will have regular fortnightly appointments at the Orthotics Department (9463 2303) for review of your HALO brace.

### **Further Questions:**

If you have any further questions, please ask your Orthotist, Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist.

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

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## Checklist of Education / Training Prior to Discharge

- I understand my movement precautions
- I understand 24/7 use applied directly to skin
- I understand how to check for and prevent pressure areas
- I understand how to wash and clean pin sites
- I am able to get in and out of bed independently
- I understand how to bed bath, toilet and dress whilst requiring my brace
- I understand how to bed bath, toilet and dress whilst requiring my brace
- My Halo ring pins are rated to:
  - 1.5 Telsa or
  - 3 Telsa
- I have organised an outpatient appointment with the Orthotics Department- 02 9463 2303

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

