

Using a cervical collar

Why do I need a cervical collar?

A cervical collar (also called a neck collar) is used to keep your neck in proper position or in alignment while it is healing from surgery or injury. Your surgeon will tell you when to use your neck collar and how long you need to wear it.

There are 2 types of neck collars. You may be asked to wear either a Miami J or Aspen Vista collar. They are both pictured below.

 A Miami J cervical collar, which is a white and blue plastic collar with a blue strap across the front. The strap has "MIAMI J" printed on it. It has a blue adjustment knob at the bottom.	 An Aspen Vista cervical collar, which is a light green and white plastic collar. It has a white strap across the front with "Vista" printed on it. It has a yellow adjustment knob at the bottom.
<p>Miami J Collar</p> <p>Picture used with permission from Ossur Supplies.</p>	<p>Aspen Vista Collar</p> <p>Picture used with permission from Aspen Medical Products Inc.</p>

How to remove your cervical collar and clean your skin

When laying flat:

1. Lie flat in bed without a pillow. Keep your head in a neutral position.
2. Undo the Velcro straps. Remove the back of the collar, sliding it out from under the neck if needed.
3. Remove the front.
4. Wash the front of your neck with mild facial soap and water and completely dry the skin. The back of your head will be checked and cleaned at a later step.
5. Clean the front and back of your collar and replace soiled pads with clean ones as directed below.

When sitting up:

You must have permission from your surgeon to do this.

1. Sit up in a firm chair in front of a mirror.
2. Keep your head in a **neutral position. A neutral position is when your nose in line with your belly button and chin level.** Do not bend your neck forward, backward or sideways.
3. Undo the Velcro straps and remove the back and front of the collar.
4. Wash your neck with mild facial soap and water and completely dry the skin.
5. Clean your collar and replace soiled pads with clean ones as directed below.

Cleaning your collar

When you clean your collar you will need to have at least one set of replacement pads.

1. Remove the old pads one at a time and replace with the new matching pad. The pads attach with Velcro. Look carefully at the shape as you remove so that you can reposition the clean pads properly. Taking a photo of the collar when it is assembled can help you remember how it looks.
 2. Wash the pads with mild facial soap and water. Do not use bleach or harsh detergents. Thoroughly rinse the pads with clean water and squeeze in a towel. Lay the pads out flat to air dry for about 6 to 8 hours. It may be helpful to change the pads in the evening.
 3. Wipe the plastic collar shell clean with mild soap and water.
 4. Attach the replacement pads. Adjust pads as needed to make sure no plastic touches the skin.
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How to put on your cervical collar

When laying flat:

1. Lie flat in bed without a pillow. Keep your head in a neutral position.
2. Slide the back of the collar carefully behind your neck, making sure it is centered evenly. The Velcro strap should be between your ear lobes and the top of your shoulder. Make sure the writing on the straps and back piece of the collar is face up.
3. Place the front piece up under your chin and tuck the front side pieces inside the back if there is overlap. Apply the Velcro.
4. While holding the front securely, curl the collar ends snugly against your neck. Fasten one Velcro strap, then secure the other side in the same way. Alternately tighten the straps, **one at a time**, until they are in the original position.

When sitting up:

1. Place the back of the collar behind your neck. Make sure it is centered evenly.
2. Pick-up the front piece of the collar and position the chin piece directly under your chin.
3. While holding the front securely, curl the collar ends snugly against your neck. Fasten one Velcro strap, then secure the other side in the same way. Alternately tighten the straps, **one at a time**, until they are in the original position.

Cleaning the back of your neck when lying flat

You may need someone to help you.

1. After the collar is in place, gently roll onto your side. Place a small pillow or folded towel under your cheek to prevent your head from tilting sideways.
2. Undo the Velcro strap on the top side of the collar and fold the back piece down to clean the back of your neck.
3. Make sure the back piece of the collar is replaced and securely fastened afterwards.

Bathing and skin care

You can shower or bathe with the collar on. After you wash you will need to take the collar off and wash your neck, clean the collar and change the pads.

When cleaning the skin under your collar, look for any areas of redness or irritation, especially over the bony areas like the chin, collar bones, or back of the head.

Checking the fit of your cervical collar

The collar is properly applied when:

- The chin is centered comfortably in the chin piece, with the chin flush to the front of the plastic.
- The sides of the back overlap the sides of the front.
- No plastic is touching the skin.
- No slack or gaps are in any of the straps.
- The large front and back opening are centered on the neck.

Additional instructions

- Do not drive or operate equipment while in the collar.
- Avoid strenuous activities such as heavy lifting or exercise.
- If you have sudden neck or back pain, numbness or tingling, call your surgeon right away. If you cannot reach your surgeon, go to the Emergency Department.
- If you have any questions about the use and care of your collar, call your surgeon.