

## Dr. Khajavi / Spitz Cervical Brace Instructions

### Purpose

Your cervical neck brace, or sometimes referred to as a hard collar, helps control and support your spinal posture, reduce pain, prevent further injury or hardware loosening, and promotes healing of the fusion. It will remind you to keep your neck straight. It is most often prescribed after more extensive cervical spinal fusion surgery and for cervical spine fractures, but occasionally is used in other conditions.

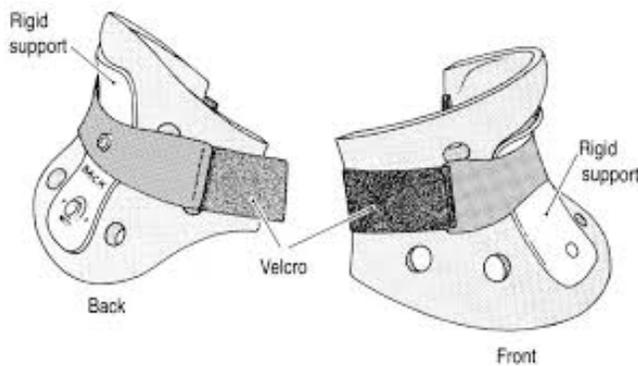
### Wearing Your Cervical Brace

The brace will keep you from bending or extending your head by making it a little uncomfortable when you begin moving into positions you should avoid. You should be able to do many normal activities by yourself or with a little help from caregivers or special tools. We will review how to put on and remove the brace at your pre-op appointment, or you may receive instructions from the occupational therapist in the hospital on the day after surgery. In some cases you may receive your brace before surgery, but most often it will be delivered to your hospital room the day after surgery.

**Putting on and taking off the Cervical Brace.** These vary by style, below are general instructions that apply to most cervical brace.

Step by step video instructions can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZPdJTZj6kE&feature=youtu.be>

Step by step instructions with illustrations can be found at [https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health\\_Information/Health\\_Topics/Documents/How\\_to\\_use\\_the\\_Aspen\\_Cervical\\_Collar.pdf](https://www.uhn.ca/PatientsFamilies/Health_Information/Health_Topics/Documents/How_to_use_the_Aspen_Cervical_Collar.pdf)



1. Position the brace so that the back is centered on your spine and so that the cervical curve of the neck insert matches the curve of your spine. This just means to place the back of the brace in its natural, and most comfortable, position on your neck.

2. Position the front piece so that it supports the chin. Squeeze the sides of the front panel together.

3. Fasten the Velcro straps to connect the front and back panels. The fit should be very snug but not uncomfortable.

4. Once the brace fits well, to remove you can open just one of the Velcro straps, and reapply it from the side, using just the one strap. This will make taking it off and putting it on much easier.

5. When the collar fits properly, your jaw is supported, and you cannot move your head very much at all. You made to loosen it to eat, and may want to put a napkin between your chin and the collar when eating.

## **Brace Cleanliness & Hygiene:** (please refer to brace care instructions from brace manufacturer)

Regular cleaning for both the brace and the skin can help prevent skin rashes or lesions. If significant skin irritation occurs, it may be necessary to stop wearing the brace for several days while the skin heals. If the brace is irritating the incision, it may be necessary to use a piece of foam to keep the incision from being irritated. Too much moisture under the brace can irritate the skin and potentially lead to sores and/or skin deterioration. For this reason, avoid using lotions or moisturizers under the brace.

Specific washing instructions are usually provided by the brace manufacturer and should be followed to preserve the brace's longevity and effectiveness. It is generally advised to hand wash the brace using water and a mild soap. Any additional padding or panels should be removed first and washed separately. A brace should be laid flat or hung to dry. Make sure the brace is rinsed thoroughly and dried completely before wearing, as a soapy or wet brace is more likely to irritate skin. You may be required to wear the collar in the shower, in which case you may be given a second collar for that purpose.

## **Daily Activities**

Your cervical brace will make it hard to flex and extend your neck, which is one of the goals of the brace. An occupational therapist can provide tools and teach you new ways to do things while wearing your brace. You cannot drive while wearing a hard collar under any circumstances, as you pose a danger to yourself and others.

## **To Avoid Muscle Deconditioning & Stiffness**

One of the side effects of wearing the cervical brace is that the neck muscles tend to become deconditioned, or weak. Some degree of this is inevitable and will resolve once physical therapy is started. To avoid this, take the brace off twice a day for 10 min. Do this only when sitting in a good chair, keeping perfectly still, and do not move your neck during this time. This also allows time for your skin to "air out".

## **How long do I need to wear the Cervical Brace?**

In most cases you will need to wear the cervical brace for 3 months, but length can vary. Your doctor will decide how long you need to wear it. Follow your doctor's advice even if you feel better and would like to stop wearing it sooner. If your doctor does not feel it's necessary to wear the hard collar when you are sleeping, he may allow you to wear a soft collar. Once the decision is made that the brace is no longer needed, you will need to wean it off gradually, meaning wear it less and less each day, over a period of about a week. This allows your neck muscles to accommodate.

**If you have any question, feel free to call our office at 404-299-3338, or 404-254-3160.**