

# Halo brace

## Introduction

The halo brace is used to treat spinal fractures by immobilising the spine. The metal ring is secured to the skull with metal rods, which attach to a well fitted plastic vest. The apparatus should provide continuous stability of the neck and feel comfortable.



## Sitting up

It is important not to try to sit up by bending at the waist as this puts extreme pressure on the front pins. Get up by rolling onto your side, dropping your legs off and pushing up with elbow and hand at the same time.

## Balance

The halo brace weighs about 7 pounds, so it can take about a week to get used to the weight of it. Initially, you may find it difficult to get your balance.

## Turning

You will be unable to turn your head. You will need to learn to use your whole body to turn.

## Sleeping

You can sleep on your back, side or stomach. A pillow or towel can be positioned under the head to make it more comfortable. You are likely to wake up feeling stiff in the morning initially - this is normal.

## Activity

You should be able to participate in normal activities (work and school) whilst wearing a halo brace. You should avoid sports (including running and jumping), crowds, alcohol and lifting.

## Clothing

- Clothing needs to be worn over the brace.
- Wear loose fitting clothes.
- Shirts and v neck jumpers with wide necks fit more easily over the brace.
- Cutting a slit down one arm in a t-shirt will allow it to be worn over the brace.
- A bikini top can be easier to put on than a bra.
- Do not wear high heels with the brace as this will further compromise balance.

## Hygiene

- Do not get the vest or liner wet.
- To wash under the vest, loosen one buckle at a time, whilst lying or sitting.
- Do not take a shower - wash sitting at a sink.
- Do not use powders or lotions under the vest.
- Do not use an electric razor on the face as this can irritate the pins.
- To wash hair lean over a sink and get someone else to wash hair. Be careful not to get shampoo close to pin sites. Care should be taken using hairdryers and straighteners.

## Care of the pin site

Wash your pin sites daily with saline (salt water solution) on a cotton bud. Do not pick at pin sites or remove scabs from the pin site. The nursing staff will show you the best way to do this.

## Pain at the pin site

Pain can indicate that the brace is too tight. The brace can only be tightened by the consultant team so please do not attempt it yourself.

Contact your GP if you are experiencing swelling at the pin site, the area around the pin becomes tender to touch or any new discharge forms near the pin site.

## Common concerns

- Itchiness: Ensure you regularly wash under the brace and avoid using blunt objects to scratch, as they can break down the skin.
- Swallowing: Eat in an upright position, cut food into small pieces and chew well.
- Driving: You cannot drive in a halo brace but can be a passenger. Take care with your brace when getting into the car.

If you have any concerns regarding your brace please contact your GP. If it is an emergency contact your nearest Accident and Emergency department.

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