

What you should know:

- A cervical collar is a type of brace used to support your neck and head in the correct position after a spine fracture and/or spinal cord injury. The collar keeps your neck from moving forward, bending backward, and your head from turning. This allows your injured spinal column and ligaments to heal.
- The collar is made of hard plastic with Velcro straps to keep it closed. Some also have soft liners that need to be changed/cleaned daily. Follow the instructions that came with the collar.
- The collar lets you get out of bed and start moving sooner after your injury. This is important because staying in bed may increase your risk of pressure sores, blood clots, and other health problems.

Special instructions:

1. Caring for your collar
 - Lie on a flat surface if the collar needs to be opened for any reason. Never open the collar unless you are lying flat.
 - Have someone trained; check the collar for its proper position before you get out of bed. Do not let anyone who is not trained adjust your collar.
2. Putting on your collar
 - Making sure that your collar is on correctly is very important. Be sure to follow the instructions you were given.
 - If the collar is too tight, or too loose, your spine may not be lined up correctly. This could cause serious problems. Your healthcare team will check your collar regularly. Tell them if you feel that it is too loose, or too tight, so they can adjust it.
3. Caring for your skin
 - Have a family member that is trained; check your skin for redness or skin changes in the morning and evening daily. Remember to lie flat in bed before your collar is opened.
 - You can shower with the collar on. After your shower, lie down and have someone that has been trained remove the collar so that your skin can be cleaned with warm water and soap. Make sure the soap is rinsed off well, and that your skin is dried gently and completely. If your collar comes with replaceable liners, you will need to put on a clean dry liner after your shower.

Call your doctor for:

- Numbness, tingling, or weakness that is new or increased.
- Any skin changes that are new or increased.

Support:

Having a spinal cord injury is life changing for you and your family. It is normal to feel angry, sad, or frightened. Talk to your healthcare team about getting further support to help cope.

Contact any of the following for further information:

National Spinal Cord Injury Association
1-800-962-9629 www.spinalcord.org

Paralyzed Veterans of America
1-800-424-8200 www.pva.org