

Scoliosis and Kyphosis bracing

Why is bracing done?

Scoliosis or kyphosis bracing is done to keep spinal curvature from getting worse. To do this:

- Your child must wear the brace for the number of hours the doctor tells you.
- The brace needs to be put on the right way.
- Your child must start wearing the brace slowly.
- Your child's skin must be cared for.
- The brace must be cleaned every day.

How is the brace put on?

The brace is worn over a cotton undershirt without seams. **Underpants can be worn under or over the brace.** For girls, the brace is worn over the bra. Recommended undershirts: Jockey® or Calvin Klein® purchased from a retail store. Brace mates® or Boston TLSO undershirt® are ordered with a prescription and order form through the orthotist. Other non-name brand shirts are also available at stores.

Two people are needed to put on the brace: you or another adult helper, and your child. Help is needed so that the brace does not twist and to help buckle the brace properly.

1. Get into position to put on the brace:
 - a. Have your child stand up.
 - b. Stand behind your child while holding the brace in your left hand.
2. Reach forward around your child to put the brace in front of your child. The opening of the brace will be facing your child so that the entire brace is in front of them.
3. Spread the brace wide enough so your child can step into the brace. The brace is now around your child. Check to be sure:
 - a. The brace is not twisted. The brace must be straight.
 - b. The opening of the brace is in the right place. The opening must be in the middle of your child's back. The bumps of your child's spine and the crease between your child's buttocks should be in line.
4. After checking the brace, ask your child to put their hands on the hips of the brace. Have your child bend slightly at the hips and knees; about 45°. This must be done so that the brace fits like it should.



Putting the brace on (continued)

5. With hands on the hips of the brace, have your child push the brace towards their feet. Your child will feel the sausage-shaped pads on the inside of the brace in place above the hipbones.
6. Have your child pull the extra cloth of underclothing out at the brace opening. This removes wrinkles in the undershirt. Wrinkles can cause sores on your child's skin.
7. Put pressure on the side of the brace opposite to the buckle opening. This will tighten the brace so it can be buckled. If the brace cannot be buckled this way, have your child lie on a firm surface. Apply pressure so the buckles can be fastened.
8. When the brace is as tight enough, fasten the buckles.
 - a. At first, the brace is buckled only up to the first line on the strap.
 - b. Over time, when your child is used to the brace, the straps may be tightened more. Talk with the doctor about how tight the brace should be.



Skin care

It is very important to make sure the skin does not get sore, red or raw. This is called skin breakdown. The skin under the brace needs to slowly get used to the pressure of the brace. Sometimes the skin over the waist and hips gets darker. That is common and is not a problem. When the brace treatment is over, this color will fade. Follow these guidelines for care of your child's skin:

- Your child should take a bath or shower every day.
- Put wet chamomile tea bags on all areas of the skin that are pink. Leave the tea bags on the skin for 15 minutes and then take off. Pat the skin dry; do not rub the skin. The pink areas show where the brace presses on the skin or where there has been rubbing from the brace.
- Check the skin often for pink, red or raw areas. This is very important when the brace is first used.
- When your child starts wearing the brace, do not let your child use creams, lotions or powders under the brace. If dry skin occurs, call your child's nurse for advice.

What if I see skin breakdown?

- If there is skin breakdown, call your child's orthotist. An orthotist is a person specially trained in using braces and exercises to correct bone deformities. If the brace does not fit right it may cause pressure or rubbing. This can cause skin breakdown. The orthotist may be able to help you solve the problem over the phone.
- The brace must not be worn until the skin heals. This may take 2 or more days. Follow the directions for skin care above.

How long should my child wear the brace?

Day one

- Your child will wear the brace for 2 to 3 hours at a time.
- Take off the brace for ½ hour then have your child wear it again for 2 to 3 hours.
- Repeat this for the whole day. Your child should not sleep in the brace at night.
- It may be uncomfortable for your child to eat with the brace tightened. The brace may be loosened slightly during meals if needed. Eating smaller portions more often may also help your child be more comfortable when eating.

Day two

- Your child will wear the brace for 4 to 5 hours at a time.
- Take off the brace for ½ hour then wear again for 4 to 5 hours.
- Repeat this for the whole the day. Your child should not sleep in the brace at night.

Days three and four

- Your child should work up to 8-hours of the brace on with ½ hour periods when the brace is off.
- When your child is able to wear the brace for 8 hours, have your child try to sleep in the brace at night.

Over time

- When your child can sleep in the brace overnight, the brace will be worn 8 to 20 (twenty) hours. Your child's doctor will tell you how long to leave the brace on.
- The 4 hours out of the brace are used for skin care, brace washing and the out-of-brace exercises.
- The brace does not need to be off 4 hours in a row, but 4 hours total out of 24 hours in a day. Your child must wear the brace a total of 20 hours a day.

A suggested schedule

Before bed

1. Wash the brace.
2. While it is drying: Have your child take a bath or shower, do exercises, and perform skin care. When finished, your child should put on a clean undershirt and put the brace on for the night.

In the morning

1. Take the brace off for skin care and put on a clean undershirt.
2. Put the brace back on.

After school

1. Take the brace off for skin care.
2. Put on a clean undershirt and put the brace back on.

How do I clean the brace?

Clean the hard plastic outer shell and the inner soft foam plastic lining every day.

Step one: Clean the lining (soft foam plastic)

1. Use a cloth with soap and water to wash.
2. Use a damp cloth to rinse.
3. Dry the lining with a terry towel. The brace may also be left to air dry. Air-drying takes about 20 to 30 minutes. If you need to dry the brace quickly, use a hair dryer set on **cool**. This will dry the lining in 5 to 10 minutes.

Step two: Clean the outer plastic (hard shell)

1. Use a cloth, soap and water to clean the brace lining.
2. Rinse the shell with a damp cloth.
3. Dry the shell with a terry towel.

General tips for brace care

- Do not leave the brace lying in an area where there is very hot sun or by a warm radiator. The heat may soften the plastic and it will lose its shape.
- Alcohol may be used instead of soap to clean the brace. After cleaning, rinse the brace with water. Using alcohol will prevent soap build-up.

Special instructions

- Special exercises for the abdomen and back will help maintain your child's strength and range of motion. Ask your child's doctor about these exercises.
- Check with your child's doctor for instructions about swimming and other activities that your child may do in and out of the brace.

This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.