

Use of an Aspen Vista Collar following a stable neck injury or fracture

(For people who need help to apply)



This leaflet is designed to provide patients with information on an Aspen Vista Collar, and to help their carers, family or friends understand how to safely remove and apply the collar as they cannot do this themselves.

Use of the Aspen Vista Collar:

Following a cervical (neck) spinal injury it is important to prevent excess movement of the spine in order to allow the fracture or damaged area to heal.

We can help your neck to heal and reduce the chance of further injury or nerve damage by applying a neck collar. This neck collar is called an Aspen Vista Collar.

Aim of the Aspen Vista Collar:

You wear the collar as an external splint to protect your neck against excessive flexion (bending forward) and rotation (twisting) while the fracture or damage is healing.

When does someone start wearing the collar?

After injury, if you need a collar, a Healthcare Professional will measure and supply you with the correct size of collar and check it fits properly.

When should I wear the collar?

You should wear the collar at all times when you are not lying in bed. You may remove the collar in bed at night if a Healthcare Professional advises that it is safe for you to do so. You can bath or shower with your collar on. After showering, dry the collar and fit new pads if required. You can clean your neck and chin with a damp cloth while lying down after removing the collar.

Diagram of Aspen Vista Collar



Front of Collar Back of Collar



Collar with pads removed

Applying and removing the Aspen Vista Collar

You should apply and remove the collar as follows:

The person wearing the Aspen Vista Collar should lie flat on their back. Take the back section of the collar. Position the back section behind the neck by pushing it down into the bed or thin pillow and under the neck following its curve until it's central. The Velcro straps should be laid halfway between the bottom of the person's earlobe and the top of their shoulder. (See Picture 1 and 2)



Picture 1



Picture 2

When the back section is in place, take the front section of the collar and scoop this up underneath the chin and jaw, making sure it contacts evenly, pushing the collar upwards and backwards in the direction of the ears (See Picture 3). Tuck the side edges in, to shape the collar round the back of the neck. The chin should be held in the centre of the chin piece (See Picture 4). Make sure the collar is central by checking there are equal amounts of plastic on each side.



Picture 3



Picture 4

Fasten one strap at a time while holding the collar securely at the front, making sure the collar remains centred. The straps come from the back piece and attach onto the front. The collar needs to be secure to provide adequate support. It should be completely snug. (See Pictures 5 and 6)



Picture 5



Picture 6

Once fitted correctly the chin should be centred and supported in the chin piece. No plastic should be touching the skin. The chin should not be able to be pushed down inside the collar, nor should this be attempted. (See Pictures 7 and 8)



Picture 7



Picture 8

Cleaning and skin care

- Keep the collar clean to prevent skin irritation.
- The pads should be changed if dirty or soiled. If you don't have a set of spare pads, contact Orthotics.
- It is easier to change one section of pads at a time to prevent confusion regarding the alignment of the pads. Before removing the soiled grey pads look carefully at the shape and orientation of them so that you can reposition the clean pads properly.
- You can remove the grey pads from the plastic collar shell and clean them with mild soap and water. To remove the pad on the back panel, unthread the straps on each side by pushing through the slits in the pad and then through the slots in the outer edge of the plastic. Do not use bleach or harsh detergents. Thoroughly rinse the pads with clean water. Wring out the excess water and squeeze in a towel. Lay the pads flat and allow to air dry. You can wipe the plastic collar shell with soap and water and wipe it dry or let it air dry.

- Attach replacement pads, these should have been provided. Note: To reattach the pads on the front of the collar, properly align the bottom (larger) pad with the corresponding hook dots and plastic circle component of the collar. For the upper pad, ensure the top piece covers the front and rear edges of the plastic components. To replace the back pad, begin by attaching the green side of the pad to the hook dots on the back panel, then re thread the straps through the padding and plastic slots.
- Adjust the pads to make sure no plastic touches the skin.

Do's and dont's while wearing the Aspen Vista Collar

Do:

- Follow your Healthcare Professional's instructions about when and how long the collar should be worn.
- Have the collar tightened to maintain comfortable snugness.
- Minimise neck movements within the collar.

Don't:

- Stop using the collar unless your Healthcare Professional approves this.
- Take part in active sports.
- Engage in any physical activity that causes excessive pain.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long does the collar need to be worn for?

Most people wear the collar for up to 12 weeks after the injury. Your consultant will tell you when you can stop wearing the collar, you will be advised to wean out of it slowly rather than discarding it immediately.

How comfortable should it be?

The collar is designed to restrict movement in the neck. This may feel uncomfortable at first and perhaps claustrophobic, but this should pass. If the skin on the chin becomes red or sore, try lying down for short periods or reclining in a comfortable chair to relieve the pressure.

You must not take the collar off at any time unless you are lying flat in bed.

What if the collar is too uncomfortable and I need to take it off?

If you have been wearing the collar without any problems up until now, first try to find out what could be causing the change in comfort.

Some common reasons are pads moving, plastic digging in, sitting or lying in a different position, collar is not fastened tight enough or objects/food falling inside the collar.

If you continue to feel uncomfortable and feel you have to take the collar off, seek medical advice, but do not stop wearing the collar without speaking to a Healthcare Professional first as this increases the risk of permanent injury.

How do I dress myself?

While wearing the collar, you can dress in the normal way on sitting up out of bed. It's advisable to remain seated where possible to reduce the risk of falling over.

How do I bath or shower?

You must bath or shower with the collar on. Afterwards, change the collar pads over following the same instructions detailed earlier in this leaflet. The damp pads can be removed and left to air dry, while the fresh dry pads are put in the collar.

Can I remove the collar to eat?

No, you must keep your collar on while eating. If you find eating difficult in the collar, small changes can help such as cutting food up into smaller pieces or eating softer food and chewing more thoroughly. The collar can be cleaned after eating if necessary, when you are lying down.

When can I lift objects and what weight is OK?

Simple domestic objects are OK but avoid heavy weights. Avoid anything that puts a strain on your neck, or which causes you adverse discomfort. You should avoid any twisting or bending of your neck.

When can I return to physical activities?

Regular exercise is beneficial to a rapid recovery, and we recommend regular walking while in the collar or using an exercise bike. Outdoor cycling is not advised as this would require neck movement for visibility. Rough terrain is unpredictable and should be avoided. Any exercise which involves a risk of falling should also be avoided. Avoid any activity that puts strain on your neck or encourages attempts at movement within the collar. You can expect some discomfort after you start exercising. You should tell your consultant or Healthcare Professional about any new and excessive pain.

What sport can I do and when can I start?

You should avoid impact sports for one year after any serious neck injury. You cannot do any sporting activities safely whilst wearing collar. You can start progressive gentle exercise after you stop wearing the collar e.g. swimming, cycling etc.

How far can I walk?

We recommend frequent short walks but be careful not to cause yourself pain. Most patients experience some muscle discomfort when they start regular activities. This should settle within 24 hours. If it continues check with a Healthcare Professional.

Can I drive while wearing my collar?

You should not drive while wearing the collar as your neck movement will be limited which will limit your line of vision and rotating your neck while wearing your collar can cause permanent injury. Fitness to drive is your personal responsibility and you should comply with the law and insurance requirements.

When can I travel or fly?

There are no medical restrictions in travelling or flying in a collar although there may be other medical reasons why it is not advisable to fly. You should check with your Healthcare Professional if this is something you are thinking about doing.

When can I return to work?

This will depend on the nature of your injury and job. Take advice from your Healthcare Professional as to when it is safe for you to return to your specific job.

Any problems?

If you experience any problems with your collar, you can contact one of the numbers below for advice or review as required.

Orthotics

Telephone: ☎ 0800 592 087

E-mail: ✉ appointmentsbookingcentre@ggc.scot.nhs.uk

Or

Contact the number below for the service that provided your collar.

Service or Location	
Healthcare Professional Contact	
Telephone Number	
Personalised Advice	

