Using Your Cervical Orthosis (Brace or Collar) at Home
(PMT and/or Philadelphia)

Purpose of the Cervical Orthosis
Your cervical orthosis (brace) helps you to control your neck posture, reduces pain, prevents further injury, and promotes healing.

Preparing for your trip home
Arrange for someone to drive you. Bend at your hip and knees to keep your head, neck and back straight when getting into and out of a car.

Taking Off and Putting On your Brace
You will need help to remove the collar. You must be lying flat. Your helper should undo the Velcro straps and remove the front of the collar. Once the front of the collar is off, you must keep your head and neck still. Your helper should change the front pads before removing the back of the collar. Your helper should help you keep your head still while gently sliding the back of the collar out from behind your head. Your helper can then change the back pads and slide the collar back into place while holding your head still. Your orthotist and/or therapist will show you how to do this. The back piece overlaps the front of the PMT collar.

Showering/bathing
If your doctor says it is okay to shower, you must wear your collar while showering. If you were fitted with a collar before you came to the hospital (or in the emergency...
room) and still have it (a beige-colored collar known as a "Philadelphia Collar"), you can wear it to shower. It is made of closed-cell foam that does not absorb water. Change back to your regular collar after the shower.

You will have two sets of pads. If you shower in the PMT collar, change to a dry set of pads after your shower. Change the pads one at a time to avoid being confused as to which pad goes where.

**Sleeping in the Brace**
Most patients wear the brace full time, taking it off only at the end of treatment. Your doctor will tell you if you can take off your brace while sleeping (or lying down). Any major changes in your condition may result in your doctor changing his instructions to you during the course of your treatment.

**Cleaning the Outside of the Brace**
Wipe off the outside with a damp or soapy cloth, and then dry. The straps can air dry while the brace is being worn.

**Cleaning the Inside of the Brace**
Remove the pads that are attached by Velcro. Put in a new or clean set of pads. Wash the soiled pads in mild soap, rinse well, and air dry. Do not leave them to soak. Do not use heat to dry them.

**Shaving**
If you shave your face, it is best to have someone help you to shave. It is a well-trained habit to move your head and neck while shaving. For years, you have tilted your head back to shave your neck. You must not do that now. Remove the collar as above and shave while lying flat. If someone else shaves you, you can focus on keeping your head still. Your helper can also help to hold your head still.

**Daily Activities**
- Eating and drinking will be awkward at first, as you can't look down at your plate or tilt your head back to drink. Use a straw to drink, raise your table or use a low chair to get your plate as high as possible. Tuck a napkin or towel under your chin (between chin and collar) to catch spills.
- Shirts that button are easier to get on and off than t-shirts.
- Use caution when going down stairs, as it is hard to look down. Stand at the top of the stairs, hold the handrail, and bend at the waist to look down the stairs to make sure your path is clear. Hold the handrail at all times, above all when going down stairs.
- You also need to be careful when walking on any uneven surface, or sidewalks that may have sudden changes due to roots raising some squares. Be very careful if it may be icy, since you may not be able to see a patch of ice.
- While you are here in the hospital and in bed, ask visitors to come up to the head of the bed to talk to you. They may not know that you can't turn your head to look at them or see them when they are at the foot of the bed.

**How long do I need to wear the Brace?**
Your doctor will decide how long you need to wear your brace. You must take care to follow your doctor's advice even if you feel better and would like to stop wearing it sooner. Your doctor will check your progress and will decide what is in your best long-term interest.
What should I do if I need adjustments to my cervical collar, new pads or concerns about the collar?

Patients should call the Orthotics Clinic at (608) 263-0583

What should I do if my neurological symptoms get worse?
If you have more numbness, tingling, pain or are less able to move or do daily activities, call your doctor.

Patients of the neurosurgery clinic: please call (608) 263-1410.

Patients of the Spine Clinic: please call (608) 265-3207.
After hours, this will give you the paging operator. Ask for the resident on call for your clinic. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

If you live out of the area, please call 1-800-323-8942, ask for your clinic.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911.

The Spanish version of this Health Facts for You is #5409s.