

Trauma and Orthopaedics

A Guide to Wearing a Spinal Collar

You have been instructed to wear a semi-rigid collar to protect the stability of your cervical spine (neck). It is extremely important you continue to wear the collar for the period of time specified by your Doctor.

You have been fitted with:

Miami J collar

Miami J Select collar



Figure 1

There are small differences between the two collars in terms of colour and shape the fit and management for both are the same.

For the purpose of education, the collar care throughout this leaflet will be demonstrated using the Miami J collar (*Figure 1*).

It is made of two halves, a front and a back. Both pieces are labelled. Collars of this type do not completely immobilise your neck. Whilst it is possible to move your neck within the collar, it is not advisable to try. It is important, however, to attempt to maintain an upright posture at all times. Indeed, the collar's main functions are to minimise movement and encourage an upright posture.

If worn correctly, all markings/writing will be 'the right way up' with Front and Back labels correctly positioned. The Velcro straps will be perfectly aligned and even in length (*figure 2 and figure 3*).



Figure 2



Figure 3

During your time in the collar it is important to look after your skin to prevent it getting sore. This means the collar must be removed periodically for your skin to be cleaned and the liners of the collar changed. **You will need a friend or relative to assist with this process.** You must not attempt to do this yourself.

Whilst it can be daunting to have the collar removed, please rest assured, if you follow the instructions and advice in this booklet you will not risk further injury to your neck.

This step by step guide will enable a designated person to safely remove your collar, wash your neck and replace it correctly:

- Gather together a bowl of warm water, flannel/cloth, soap, towel and the replacement collar pads given to you whilst in hospital. Position all items nearby and remove the pads from their packaging.
- Your role is simple in this process. Remove adequate clothing to allow uninhibited access to the collar. **You must sit up straight with an upright posture and remain completely still. Try not to move your head at all.**
- The designated collar changer can now get to work.
- Remove the collar by unfastening **ONE** of the Velcro straps only (*figure 4*).



Figure 4

- Inspect the skin in the following places: under the chin, breast bone, top of shoulders, back of head and base of the neck. Look for areas of redness or broken skin. If concerned, please contact the physiotherapist (phone number in the back of this booklet).
- Wash the neck using soapy water, rinse and dry thoroughly using the towel.
- Remove the pads **ONE AT A TIME** and replace with an identical clean pad. Pads have one silky side and one fluffy side. The silky side must rest in contact with the skin. Repeat this process until all pads have been changed. Please ensure the pads overlap the hard white plastic (*figure 5*).

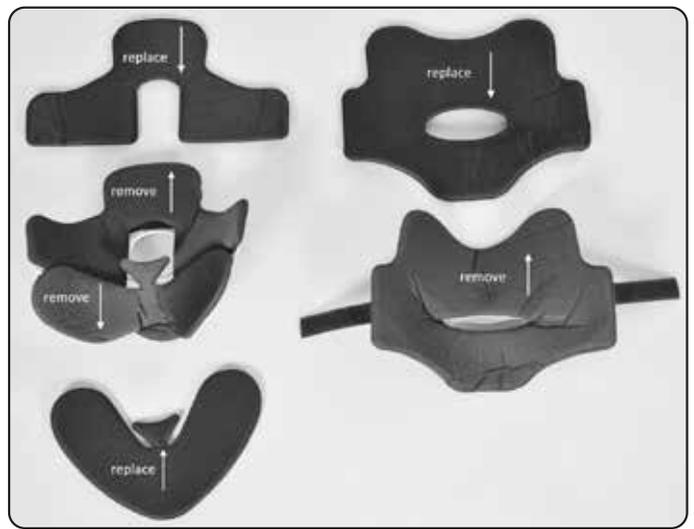


Figure 5

- Refit the collar by fastening the strap. Ensure the Velcro is aligned and the overlap is even on both straps. The person wearing the collar can assist by holding the front part of the collar under the chin.

The collar has been correctly changed and you are now free to move about again.

Now wash each pad in warm soapy water. Rinse thoroughly and leave to dry on a windowsill or radiator. Once dry, you must use these again when repeating the process.

You are expected to wear your collar at all times. This includes day and night whether standing, sitting or lying down. However, it is important for the collar to be removed every 48 hours and the process outlined above be followed to ensure skin hygiene is maintained and no pressure areas develop.

When should I call for help?

If you experience any of the following please seek urgent medical help.

- Severe neck pain.
- Weakness, tingling or loss of feeling in your face, arms or legs.
- Loss of bowel or bladder function.
- Broken skin area/pressure sores.
- If the collar breaks or is damaged in anyway.

If you have any questions or concerns whilst wearing the collar, you can contact the physiotherapist on:

■ **Durbin ward: 01392 403691**

■ **Aftercare: 01392 403509**

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by RD&E staff undertaking procedures at the RD&E hospitals.

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