

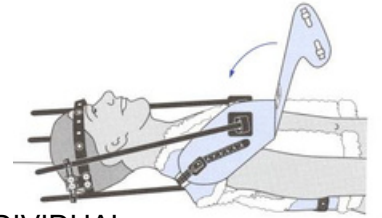
# Cascade Orthotics

## Emergency Instructions

If your pins jar loose, please go to a Hospital Emergency Room for assistance. In case of cardiac distress, CPR instructions are printed below.

**Be sure that family and friends are knowledgeable of these instructions.**

1. The patient should be lying flat on the back portion of the vest on a hard surface (floor, table or ground).
2. Loosen and release the side waist buckles.
3. The front portion of the vest is manufactured with a crease in the shell. Depress the vest between the two chest blocks and fold the vest upward at this point, exposing the sternum.
4. Using the back portion of the vest as a “crash board”, perform CPR as necessary. CPR SHOULD BE ADMINISTERED ONLY BY A QUALIFIED INDIVIDUAL.



### INTRODUCTION

You have already been through a lot to get to this point and we would like to offer you some advice and guidance so as to make the rest of your recovery as smooth and as comfortable as possible. You have suffered an injury to your cervical spine (the bones in your neck) and the pathway to proper healing of this injury is to immobilize and place traction on that part of your spine. Think of your vertebrae as being doughnuts stacked on top of one another with your spinal column running up through the centre. With unstable vertebrae due to either a dislocation or fracture of the bones, the risk of damage to your spinal column is great. This is why you have been fitted with a Halo Brace. The brace consists of three major parts: the vest, the superstructure and the ring. The ring goes around the head and is held in place by four pins that penetrate the outer layer of the skull. The vest is a plastic jacket that positions and holds the halo ring in place while distributing the weight of your head to your chest. The vest is lined with a sheepskin liner that is comfortable and lets your skin breathe. The superstructure is the network of four rods and two head blocks that connects your halo ring to the vest and allows proper positioning and traction of the neck. The rest of this document will describe some helpful hints as well as some DO's and DON'Ts for your recovery with the Halo brace. Your family and friends should become familiar with the process. The following information should be used as a guideline. If you have further questions or need clarification, please consult with your Orthotist or Physician.

### PIN SITE CARE

To help avoid infection, the areas around your pins should be cleansed at least once a day. This is best done with the help of another person. Pour Normal Saline solution on a sterile Q-tip. Clean the skin around the pin in a semi-circular motion. DISCARD the Q-Tip, and use a new one for each pin site. If you notice the pin sites are painful, inflamed, bleeding or oozing a runny discharge, notify your Orthotist or Physician immediately. These may be signs of infection or loss of pin torque. Daily use of antibiotic or iodine-containing ointments is not recommended except on the advice of a Physician. Some pain and discomfort is normal for the first few days of wearing the Halo. If at any time the pain becomes extreme, or if a pin feels loose or shifts, contact your Physician or Orthotist immediately.

## VEST CARE

It is extremely important that the vest fits you well. It should be snug but not restrictive to breathing or normal body movements. Over time, you may develop sensitive spots under or around the vest. These areas can be corrected by having your Orthotist alter the vest or offer extra padding in certain locations. If the vest becomes too loose or too tight, or if you have trouble sitting or moving, consult your Orthotist for possible adjustments. **DO NOT MAKE ANY MODIFICATIONS TO THE VEST ON YOUR OWN.** If you notice any loose screws on the vest, contact your Orthotist to have them secured.

## SKIN CARE

It is recommended that you wash under the vest on a daily basis by passing a slightly moistened towel, beneath the front and the back portions of the vest. Be careful not to allow the liner to absorb excessive amounts of moisture. Use a blow dryer on the cool setting after your bathing procedure to dry off any excess moisture.

## BATHING

You should **NEVER ATTEMPT SHOWERING** since there is no reliable way to keep your vest liner dry. You can either use sponge baths for the rest of your body or use a bathtub with about 2-3 inches (5-7 cm) of water. Make sure it isn't close to your vest or liner. Use towels to help keep your vest from getting wet.

## HAIR WASHING

The best way to wash your hair is to lie down on a flat surface such as a bed or a couch with your head extended out over the edge. The vest should be covered with towels and a catch basin should be placed under your head. In addition, if your head is slightly lower than your body, water will run off your head instead of down your vest. Your hair should then be washed as normal with care being taken not to bump or hit the pins, as this may cause discomfort. Once your hair has been washed, the pin sites should be cleaned as instructed in the PIN CARE section. No hair colouring, permanents, or treatments should be attempted while wearing a Halo since this may lead to infected pin sites and discomfort around the pins.

## SCRATCHING BENEATH THE VEST

If you experience itching sensations under your vest, use a blunt object to scratch, taking care not to break the underlying skin.

## CLOTHING

The halo vest is worn next to the skin so clothing will have to go over the vest. Shirts should be found that are a few sizes larger than you would normally wear. Button up or large elastic collared shirts, such as sweatshirts work the best. Some slight modifications may have to be made to the garment for a better fit. In the summer you may want to slide a modified cotton undershirt under your vest, as the wool liner may be a little warm. In winter, you will need an oversized coat and a couple of scarves to keep you warm. Always wear low heeled shoes with good traction to avoid falling or slipping. If you require assistance, please contact us as we often have donated clothing that has been altered for halo usage.

## SLEEPING

You may find yourself a little more tired than usual due to the stress you have been under and the traumatic injuries you have sustained. This is normal and should not be cause for alarm. You will find that you can sleep on your back, or sides, whichever is most comfortable. **DO NOT** place a pillow behind your head as it may place pressure upon the neck. If desired, a scarf or pillow case may be wrapped around the neck to provide the sensation of contact.

When rising from a lying position, you will have to be cautious since bending at the waist, such as sitting up, puts a lot of stress on the skull pins. Instead, it would be easier to roll to one side and use your arms to press your torso up in a log rolling pattern. If someone is assisting you, do not let them pull the upright bars, as this will put stress on your skull pins as well.

## DIET AND EATING

Since your lifestyle has temporarily altered, you may find that your weight may fluctuate slightly. This is normal. Should you notice the vest becoming too loose or too tight, you should have it adjusted by your Orthotist. Swallowing may be difficult at first and care should be taken to ensure that your food is cut into small pieces and chewed thoroughly to avoid choking. Having a glass of water with a straw handy to assist in swallowing will be beneficial.

## TRAVELLING

Extra weight has been added to the top half of your body and you will notice that your balance is different. This “Top Heavy” feeling will make it easier to fall over and may take some practice to get used to. It is a good idea initially, to practice bending over and walking around with a family member or friend. Handrails will become very useful, as will learning to bend with your knees. Bumping into things may be a problem until you get used to the size of the Halo and its bars, as well as the fact that it is harder to look down than it used to be. It is **NOT** recommended for a Halo wearer to drive a motorized vehicle since the field of vision is narrowed. Riding in a car does not pose any particular problems except when entering and exiting the vehicle. To enter, sit sideways on the seat and slide back with your body bent forward, then swing your legs around. To exit, just reverse the same procedure. Seat belts should always be worn, since sudden jerks or stops could cause a problem with your pins. Other forms of public transportation should pose no major problems, other than getting into tight crowds.

## READING

Using an incline desk or music stand to hold your laptop, tablet or other reading media will help alleviate tired arms.

## HALO REMOVAL

Congratulations! Your Physician has advised you that your halo is ready for removal. The actual removal of the Halo is a simple procedure. Notify your Orthotist of the removal date and time so that they can be present for the procedure. You may experience some discomfort where the skin has adhered to the pins. Polysporin will be applied to the pin sites to provide a plug against the outside environment. Typically, the wound at the pin site will close within 24-36 hours. Polysporin should also be applied to all four pin sites, once on each of the following two mornings after the removal of the Halo. Your hair should not be washed until after the pin sites have closed. Normal bathing may commence at that time as well.

Once your Orthotist has removed the Halo, your neck may feel weak since it has not supported your head in quite some time. **Because of this, you may be fitted with a temporary neck collar to allow your neck some time to strengthen. This normally takes a couple of weeks.**

Since your neck will be weak, be careful when returning to normal activities and refer to your doctor as far as resuming work, contact sports and other physical activities.



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