



Custom Boston Brace for Scoliosis

Wear and care guide for patients

Scottish National Spine Service



You have recently been fitted with a new brace to help control the curve in your spine. This is a custom medical device which has been designed for use by you only. This leaflet provides information on how to apply the brace and care for your skin.

It may be necessary for you to use your Spinal Brace in conjunction with other medical devices such as a wheelchair or ankle braces. If this is the case your Orthotist will make sure your brace fits well alongside this.

Applying your brace:

There are several methods of application. At first you will need help, but you may find you are able to become more independent over time. The easiest method is described below:

- Make sure all the straps are outside the brace and tabbed back on themselves securely.
- Ensure you have a safe and secure place and that you have a suitable, clean vest on.
- Spread the brace from the waist, twisting your body into it. The brace can be stiff when new, but this should improve with time and wear.
- The opening of the brace should be centered on your back so the bumps of your spine and the crease between the buttocks are in the middle of the opening.
- Push the brace down by placing hands on your hips – the waist pads on the inside of the brace should rest just above your hips and below your ribs.
- Lean forward on to your forearms on a flat surface such as a table or counter – your helper will thread the straps through the buckles.
- Your helper applies pressure with the flat of one hand to the side opposite of the buckle. At the same time your helper pulls the velcro strap with the other hand towards the hand applying pressure.
- Secure the bottom strap first, then the top and middle.

- At the time of fitting your Orthotist will apply a mark on your straps as a guide on how tight to fasten them.

The link below shows a video with some useful tips for putting on your brace:

<https://services.nhslothian.scot/scottishnationalspine/service/brace-useful-tips/>



Removing the brace:

- Again you will need help with this initially but may be able to become more independent with this over time.
- Remove or lower any of your clothing that may be in the way.
- Unfasten all straps making sure they are tabbed back on themselves to prevent them getting tangled and wearing quicker.
- Spread the brace from the waist, twisting your body out of it.
- Check your skin for any marking or redness that is not usually there.
- Check the brace for any wear and tear.
- Make sure the brace is stored in a secure place.
- Any concerns should be reported to your Orthotist.

Breaking into your brace

Specific timescales can be discussed with your Orthotist, but as a rough guide you should aim to be at full time wear over 1-3 weeks. Over this time you should gradually increase the time per day you are in your brace. The following programme is designed to help your skin and muscles adjust to the brace.

Stage One: Wear your brace for up to six hours daily.

- Best accomplished around school and clubs and up to bedtime.
- Apply your brace for two hours and then remove. Check your skin and rub with alcohol gel if required. If your skin is just pink, reapply brace for two more hours and repeat up to six hours in total.

- If your skin is sore or red, wait 30 minutes then rub with alcohol gel and wear for two more hours up to six hours total.
- If issues persist, please contact your Orthotist.

Stage Two: Wear your brace for 10 hours daily. You can decide if this is through the day or through the night (breaks as below not required if night time).

- Apply brace for four hours. Remove and check skin. If necessary, rub with alcohol gel.
- Reapply brace for three hours.
- Remove and check skin. If necessary, rub with alcohol gel.
- Reapply brace up to 10 hours in total.

Stage Three: Wear brace for 20 hours daily.

- At this stage you should be feeling confident in wearing your brace and working to establish a good routine. This should include when you plan to have your time out.

Successful brace wearing

Literature shows the brace is most effective when worn 20 hours per day; however there may be exceptions where your Orthotist/ Consultant advises otherwise. If this is the case, you should discuss with them directly.

- Gradually increase your daily wear time to 20 hours following advice from your Orthotist and following the stages above.
- If you experience any discomfort or barriers to wear, then please contact your Orthotist immediately.
- Once wearing the brace for 20 hours daily the aim of the brace is to delay/halt progression of your Scoliosis while allowing you to grow.
- Take care of your skin daily and wear a Boston T or snug fitting vest/ t-shirt at all times under your brace.

- Properly apply brace to body.
- Clean the brace daily.

More information on bracing can be found on the Scottish National Spine service website (on page 3 of this booklet).

Skin care

It is important to become familiar with normal pressure areas and what is acceptable skin marking. Your skin may become pink in certain areas - your Orthotist will point these out.

It is very important to **prevent skin breakdown** - sore, red, raw skin. This can be an indication that the brace is not on correctly or is becoming too small. If you have any concerns, please contact your Orthotist.

To protect the skin:

- Shower/bathe daily. Apply alcohol gel to high pressure areas every day. Gel can be purchased at local pharmacies and some supermarkets (**Spirigel, Cuticura** etc. are some brand names). Alcohol gel plus the friction of your hand will toughen the skin.
- Pay special attention to pink areas of the skin where the brace pressure is highest.
- Always wear a clean Boston T or snug fitting t-shirt/vest under the brace. You may have to change more frequently in warmer weather.
- Always wear underwear and clothing over the brace to prevent skin breakdown around the elastic waistband.
- Ensure the brace is tightened as advised by your Orthotist, as a loose brace may rub and cause skin breakdown.
- The use of dry corn flour or talc on skin is often helpful in hot weather or on skin sensitive to alcohol.
- Initially do not use creams or lotions under the brace as they will soften the skin. Please discuss with your Orthotist if you rely on these.

Sometimes the skin over the waist and hips gets darker. This is common and not something you should worry about. When your brace treatment is complete the discoloration will fade.

Cleaning your brace

It is important to clean the foam liner of the brace daily. The foam will not absorb moisture, however, perspiration will collect on it. Wipe inside and out with a damp cloth/anti-bacterial wipe. Rub the lining with alcohol gel and leave to dry. Stubborn marks on the outside can be removed with nail polish remover. Straps will show the most wear and can be replaced by your Orthotist on request.

Planned reviews

Your Orthotist will discuss your specific follow up plan but generally you will be X-rayed in your brace 6-10 weeks after fit. This will allow us to confirm that your brace is working as intended.

A plan will always be in place for your next appointment. This may be by specifically booking a date and time but may also be through our Planned Repeat List (PRL) process.

Unplanned reviews

If you experience any problems with your brace such as discomfort, redness or skin break down you should contact your Orthotist immediately.

How long should my spinal brace last?

You have been supplied with one spinal brace and the length of time it lasts will depend on how quickly you grow. These are some signs that your brace is getting small:

- Brace not going on as easily as usual.
- Struggling to fasten the straps to the marks.
- Discomfort/ tightness where it has not been before.
- Trouble eating in brace when you have not had before.

- Red/ abraded marks or bruising on the skin from areas of discomfort.
- More than 2 fingers width gap underneath your arm on the high side and at the bottom of your brace when sitting.

It is important we resolve any issues with fit or comfort quickly to ensure the brace continues to perform as intended.

Please also notify us of any issues or incidents you have had in regards to the brace even if you have managed to resolve these at home. This can be done by phone or at your next planned appointment.

Brace repairs

It is important to check you brace regularly for signs of wear and tear:

- The buckles and straps should all be attached securely.
- The Velcro should be strong and stay fastened securely.
- The elastic should be securely attached to the plastic and not coming away.
- All edges of the brace should be smooth.

We would ask that you call should the brace need repaired in any way. This can often be done by our workshop without the need for an appointment with your Orthotist.

Disposing of the brace

Once your brace has been outgrown and replaced you are welcome to keep it. However if you chose not to, your Orthotist will dispose of it. Unfortunately we are not able to reuse or recycle the brace in any way. If for any reason you have to dispose of the brace at home, please make sure it has no information that would identify you. It can be disposed of in your non recycling bin.

The contact details for our department are:

Orthotist Name:

The Orthotics Department

SMART Building

Astley Ainslie Hospital

133 Grange Loan

Edinburgh

EH9 2HL

Telephone: 0131 537 9177 (option 2)

Job Number:



Unique Device Indicator



Single Patient
Multiple Use



Keep away from direct
sunlight/heat sources



Keep dry - protect from moisture



Consult instructions for use (IFU)

For a copy of this booklet in larger print, Braille, or your community language (Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Urdu or Polish), please call 0131 536 9434.