



**Kids Brain Doc**

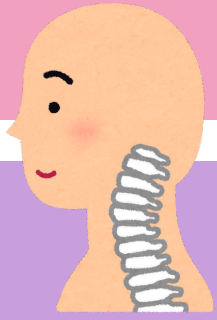
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# Cervical Ligamentous Injury

## Patient Packet



# Diagnosis: Cervical Ligamentous Injury



## What is it?

When the soft tissues (*ligaments*) that support your child's neck are stretched or injured. These ligaments help keep the neck stable and protect the spinal cord. It's most commonly detected on MRI.

## Who does it affect?

This can happen at any age, but it's more frequent in younger children (under 8), who have more flexible spines and bigger heads in relation to their bodies.



## How did my child get it?

Most commonly from a bump or jolt, like in a car accident, a fall, a sports mishap, or a sudden hit to the head and neck.



## Is it Harmful?

Usually, a cervical ligamentous injury heals on its own with good neck support in 6 to 12 weeks, without needing surgery. However, if the injury leads to instability or affects the spinal cord or nerves, which is rare, extra care or treatment might be necessary to avoid issues like weakness or changes in bowel or bladder control.



## What is the Treatment?

Most neck ligament injuries in children don't require surgery and can be managed safely. Typically, the treatment involves rest, managing pain, and sometimes physical therapy to aid recovery. Your child might need to wear a neck (*cervical*) collar for a while to support their neck and let the ligaments heal properly. Surgery is rarely necessary, but it might be an option if the injury leads to instability or impacts the spinal cord, to ensure your child's spine heals safely.

# Cervical Collar

## What is it?



A cervical collar is a firm brace that fits around your child's neck to provide support and protection. It is designed to hold the neck in a neutral position and reduce strain on the cervical spine.

Cervical collars come in different sizes and styles to fit children of all ages. Your child's care team will choose the type that best meets their medical needs.

## What does it do?



- Provides support: Helps to stabilize and support the spine, promoting proper alignment and reducing strain on injured areas.
- Limits movement: Restricts unnecessary neck movement, such as bending or turning, to prevent further injury and facilitate healing.
- Reduces pain: Decreases discomfort by limiting motion and supporting the neck in a safe, neutral position.
- Aids in recovery: Promotes healing after injury by protecting the cervical spine and preventing harmful movement or misalignment.

## Why is it Important?



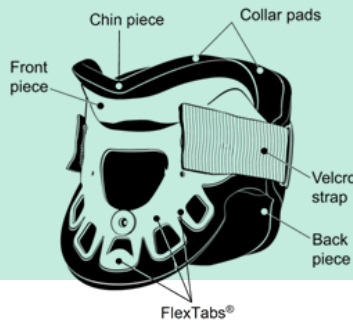
- Healing: Helps protect the neck and cervical spine from further injury, allowing injured tissues to heal safely.
- Posture control: Maintains proper alignment of the neck, reducing strain on muscles, joints, and ligaments.
- Pain relief: Provides support to the neck, which can decrease discomfort by limiting painful movements.
- Prevention of complications: Wearing the cervical collar as directed keeps the neck stable and helps prevent complications during recovery.

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# Steps on how to wear the Cervical Collar

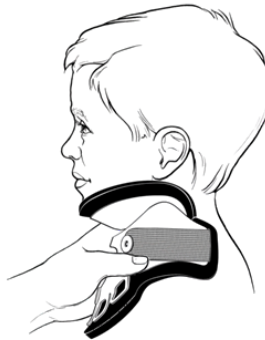
## 1 Position the head and neck

- Make sure your child's head and neck are straight and facing forward in a neutral position.
- Avoid bending or turning the neck while applying the collar to prevent unnecessary movement.



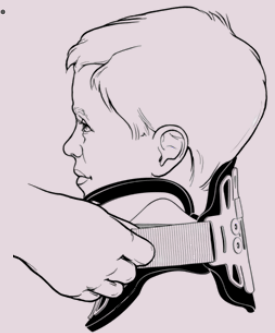
## 2 Place the front piece

- Position the front of the collar under the chin, with the chin resting comfortably in the molded support.
- Ensure the collar sits flat against the chest without pushing the head upward.



## 3 Apply the back piece

- Slide the back portion of the collar behind the neck so it rests evenly against the upper back and head.
- The back piece should sit centered and not tilt to one side.



## 4 Secure the straps

- Fasten the Velcro straps on both sides, tightening them evenly so the collar is snug but not too tight.
- You should be able to slide one finger between the collar and the skin.



## 5 Double check for fit

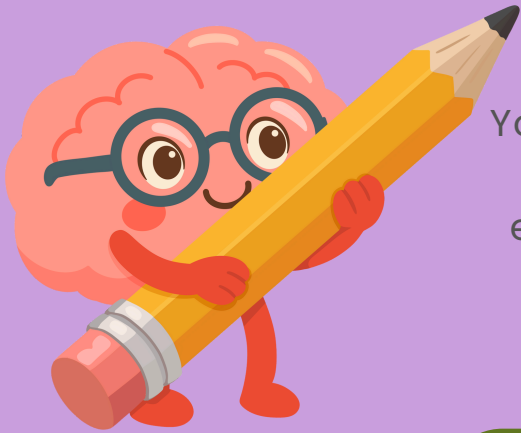
- The collar should hold the neck steady without causing pain, skin pressure, or trouble breathing or swallowing.
- Check for redness, gaps, or pinching around the chin, jaw, and shoulders.

## 6 Keep collar in place

- Leave the collar on at all times unless your child's care team gives specific instructions to remove it.
- If the collar becomes loose, wet, or uncomfortable, contact your care team for guidance.

# Recovery & Follow-Up

## ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS



Your child may return to school if comfortable, but should avoid wearing backpacks, physical education (PE), recess, sports, and any activities that involve running, jumping, or contact until cleared by the care team.

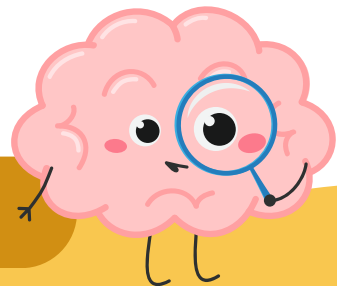


## HOME CARE

- **Sleeping:** Wear collar while sleeping, use a firm pillow to support the head and neck, and avoid sleeping on the stomach. Side or back sleeping is safest to maintain proper neck alignment.
- **Showering:** Wear collar while showering. After showering, have your child lie flat, gently clean the skin around the neck, and swap to a dry collar while the wet one air-dries completely.

## FOLLOW-UP

- 6-weeks: X-rays while standing up
- 12-weeks: X-rays while bending the neck forward/backward to see if any movement of the spine (*instability*)



## LONG-TERM CARE

**Watch out for symptoms that indicate injury to the spinal cord/nerves**

- Persistent or worsening neck pain that doesn't improve with rest or treatment.
- Arm or hand pain, numbness, tingling, or weakness
- Changes in bladder or bowel function, such as incontinence or difficulty urinating or loss of control