

Traction: Halo-Vest

Your child has had an injury to the upper part of the spine. This injury requires a halo-vest. The halo-vest is a head ring with four posts attached to a plastic, fleece-lined vest (Picture 1). Your child's head is held in position by the 4 pins coming off the ring. The pins are attached to the skull under the skin. The halo-vest keeps your child from moving his head and neck. This helps prevent more damage to the neck and lets the injury heal.

Care of the Halo Pin Sites

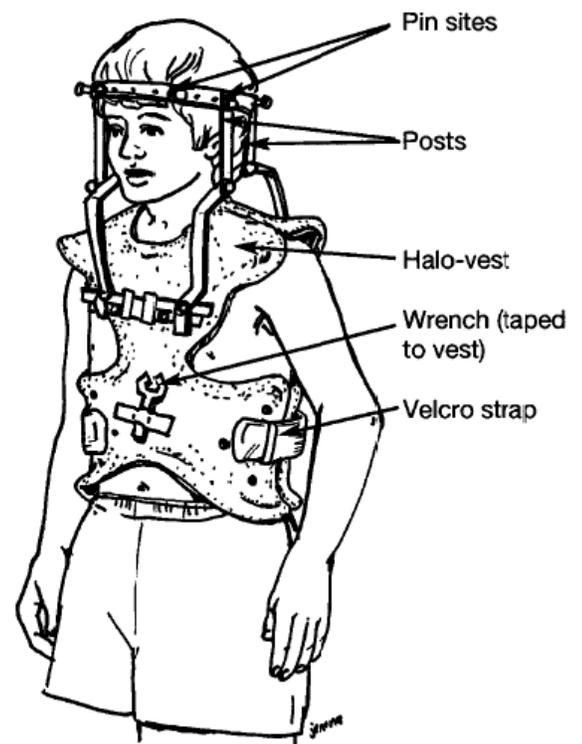
Clean the area around the pins 2 to 3 times a day:

1. In a clean cup, mix 1/2 cup water with 1/2 cup hydrogen peroxide. You may use this solution for 48 hours, then throw it away and make fresh solution.
2. To clean the pin sites, use a cotton swab (a Q-tip®) dipped in the peroxide mixture. (Dip only **clean** swabs into the solution.) Start where the pin enters the skin and clean outward in a circular motion. With the swab, gently push the skin back from the pins. This will help keep the skin from sticking to the pins and will decrease scarring.
3. Use a clean swab for each pin site.
4. Wipe the pin sites dry with a clean towel.

Expect to see clear fluid draining from around the pin sites. If you notice pus, redness, swelling or severe tenderness, call your child's doctor.

Skin Care

Check the skin under the vest and at the pin sites for pressure sores every day. Pressure sores look like red, blistered areas. If red areas develop, have the child lie in different positions when sleeping. Do not use soap, lotion, powders or cornstarch under the vest. These products can make the skin sore.



Picture 1 The halo-vest is usually worn for 8 to 12 weeks.

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Skin Care, continued

Clean under the vest every day. To clean:

1. Wet a towel with warm water. Wring it out well.
2. Have your child lie flat. Loosen the Velcro[®] straps.
3. Pass the towel under the vest from side to side to loosen dirt and to stimulate the skin. Then take a dry towel and do the same.
4. Refasten the Velcro straps.

Care of the Vest

- To clean the vest, wipe it with a damp (not wet) cloth.
- If the vest padding gets wet, dry it with a hairdryer on the "cool" setting.

Clothing

Loose-fitting shirts, sweaters or dresses (a size or two larger than usual) may be worn over the vest. A T-shirt, cut to fit up under the vest, may be worn for comfort.

Bathing

- Your child may have sponge baths or tub baths (with 1 or 2 inches of water) but no showers.
- He should have help getting in and out of the tub and should not get the halo vest wet.

Hair Care

Wash your child's hair twice a week or more often if needed. To do this:

1. Using a cotton swab put some petroleum jelly (such as Vaseline[®]) on the pin sites. This will keep them from getting wet.
2. Put towels or plastic wrap on the top of the vest to keep it dry.
3. Either lay your child on his or her back with the child's head over the edge of the bed or have your child bend over a sink. Do **not** let your child do this without your help.
4. After the shampoo, wipe the Vaseline off the pin sites using a clean towel or washcloth.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your child's doctor if any of the following occurs:

- Drainage (other than clear fluid) from the pin sites
- Pain
- Fever (temperature over 100.5° F under the arm, 101.5° F orally or 102.5° F rectally)
- Numbness or tingling
- If the child falls.

Activity

While your child is wearing the halo-vest, he or she may not be able to participate in activities such as sports, physical education classes, swimming, bike riding and others. Ask your child's doctor for specific information.

Other Tips and Advice

- When helping your child get up from a sitting or lying position, never pull up with the posts. Place your hands behind your child's shoulders or under his arms and lift.
- If your child has any pain around the pin sites, you may give an acetaminophen product (such as Tylenol®). Follow the dosage directions on the bottle.
- The wrench for removing the halo-vest should always be taped to the front of the child's vest in case of emergency. Do not remove it.

Follow-Up Care

- Your child will have X-rays taken during follow-up appointments to see how his neck is healing.
- Be sure to keep all follow-up appointments.

If you have any questions, please ask your doctor or nurse, or call _____.