

Scoliosis: Wearing a Brace

Scoliosis (skoe-lee-OH-sis) means an unnatural curve in the spine. The cause is usually not known. Different types of braces are worn to prevent more curving. If the braces are worn as directed, surgery on the spine can sometimes be avoided.

Preparing Yourself Mentally

- Sometimes it is hard to keep wearing the brace. The first 2 weeks are the hardest. After that, the brace will be more familiar and it won't bother you as much.
- When the brace is first put on, you may have feelings that you "can't stand it," but keep it on as long as you can. If you feel you can't wear the brace another minute, take it off for a while. As soon as you feel up to the challenge, put the brace on and try again. You may feel "trapped," but stick with it. In a short time you'll feel better and will be doing most of the things you did before.
- At first you may feel the brace is "too tight" or "too long." You'll get used to it with time. It is important to keep the brace snug.

Charleston Night Brace

The Charleston night brace, also called the Charleston bending brace, opens in the front. It is designed to be worn at night. It may be more comfortable to wear a T-shirt under the brace. When you first start to wear the brace, you may need to have help putting it on. Be sure to follow your doctor's orders for wearing the brace.

Care of the Brace

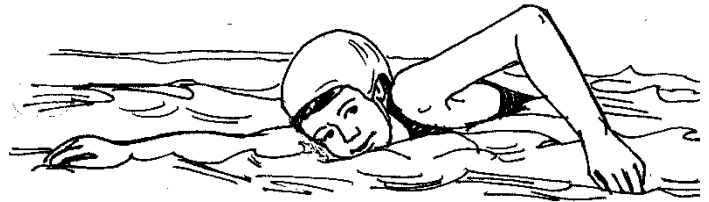
Do not put any part of the brace into water. Wash the brace daily with a washcloth and mild soap. Rinse with a washcloth and clear water and wipe it dry.

Skin Care

- Wash and rinse your body thoroughly every day.
- Apply rubbing alcohol to toughen the skin. You may also try witch hazel or another solution, but check with your doctor first.
- Check your skin for red spots. Use a mirror to see all areas.
- You can enjoy many activities including swimming and other non-contact sports. Your skin may itch a lot when the brace is first removed. Apply rubbing alcohol to the skin. It will help stop the itching. Other ways to stop the itching are: use a hairdryer on the "cool" setting, use a fan, wear loose clothing or ask your doctor for a medicine to decrease the itching.

Sports and Other Activities

- It is important to get plenty of exercise. You can continue most non-contact sports and activities such as swimming, biking, golf and walking (Picture 1). Your brace should be worn during these activities (except for swimming) if your doctor has told you to wear the brace 23 hours per day.
- If your doctor says you may remove your brace during an activity, be sure to count it as time out of the brace.
- Be sure to follow your doctor's instructions and ask any questions you may have.



Picture 1 It is important to get plenty of exercise.

Nutrition

- Eating regular, well-balanced meals will help to keep you healthy. It will also help the treatment to be a success. Just try not to gain weight so the brace will continue to fit.
- If you feel "sick to your stomach," eat smaller amounts of food and liquids, but eat more often. For example, eat 5 to 6 small meals a day rather than 3 large ones.

Clothing

- Wear a cotton sleeveless undershirt under the brace. Buy one size larger than your usual size. Make sure it is 2 or 3 inches below the bottom of the brace.
- If you have a Boston or Milwaukee brace:
 - Large sweatshirts and T-shirts are easy to get into and to wear over your brace. Loose-fitting clothes make the brace less noticeable.
 - Buy jeans or slacks a size larger than you usually wear.

Special Tips

When you go to sleep, try to lie on the side that is curved outward. Try to get back to your normal activities as soon as possible. Let your friends know you're wearing a brace. They can help you be less self-conscious about "being different."

When to Call Your Brace Specialist

The length of time the brace must be worn is different for each person. You'll have an appointment to see the brace specialist about every 6 weeks. Call your brace specialist if any of the following occurs:

- Any breaks in the brace.
- If the brace feels too tight.
- Any pressure areas on your skin.

Follow-Up Appointments

Be sure to keep the appointments with your doctor and brace specialist as scheduled.

If you have any questions, please call _____.