

## A guide to managing your Thoracolumbosacral Orthosis (TLSO) independently



Physiotherapy Department

**Patient's name**

**Date**

**Name of Physiotherapist**

**Telephone 01483 424153**

This booklet is an adjunct to the TLSO training that has been provided to you during your hospital admission. It is not specific to a particular injury.

Should you have any concerns that are not addressed within this booklet, please contact your ward Physiotherapist – the contact number can be found on the back of the booklet.

## What are the benefits of wearing a TLSO?

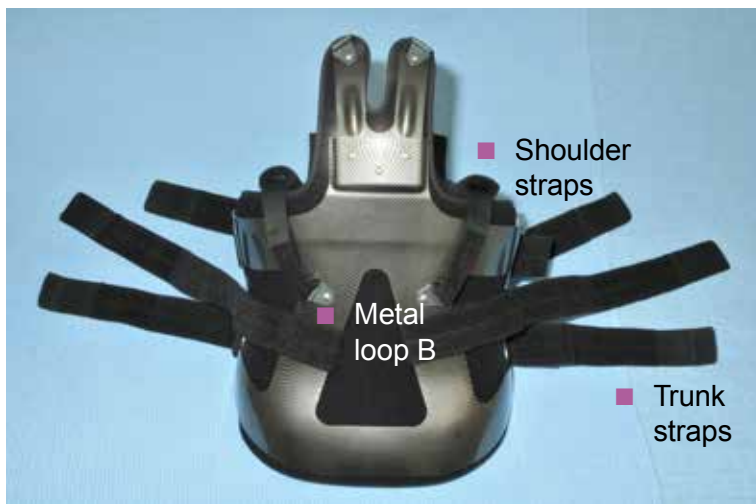
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TLSO stands for 'Thoracolumbosacral Orthosis' – this means that it provides stability to the upper, middle and lower sections of your back. It has two parts – a front section and a back section (see pictures below).

It is used to support your back and help with pain management whilst healing occurs. Hence, a tight fit is required.



**Front section**



**Back section**

## How do I put a TLSO on?

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Always keep one side of the front section done up.

The TLSO should not be directly against your skin; ensure therefore that you have a clean, loose fitting, button-less, cotton t-shirt on before you put your TLSO on.



To ensure that a good fit is achieved it is advisable to sit in front of a full length mirror. Make sure that you are sitting upright with a good posture.

Take hold of the TLSO; thread one arm through one of the shoulder straps and then the other arm through the second shoulder strap, like you are putting on a rucksack.



The top of the back section should line up with the middle of your shoulder blades and the base of the back section should be level with the top of your bottom, so that it rests comfortably on your hips.

There should be equal amounts of the back section visible on both sides of your body. The top of the back section on each side of your body should be level with each other, as should the bottom.



Position the front section of the TLSO against your stomach. Check that the label is at the top and central.

Hold the front section of the TLSO in place. Anchor it to the back section of the TLSO by feeding all the trunk straps through the metal loops (A) (on the front) and secure them to the corresponding velcro on the back section. When facing the mirror there should be equal amounts of the back section visible on both sides of your body.



Take a deep breath in and as you breathe out tighten the middle strap. Repeat this to tighten up the top and bottom straps.

The front section of the TLSO should remain in a central position over your stomach once all straps have been tightened.



## Final Check

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This is how the TLSO should look when it is on correctly:



If the TLSO does not look like this, take it off and start again, putting the brace on following the instructions above.



## How do I take a TLSO off?

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In sitting undo the three trunk straps through metal loops A, on one side only, and fold them back on themselves.



Take one arm at a time out of the shoulder straps (like taking off a rucksack) to remove the whole TLSO.



## How do I take care of the TLSO?

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- Do not get the brace wet – do not shower or bathe in it.
- The only part of the brace that can be removed is the liner of the back section. This should only be removed if it needs cleaning. In this incidence it can be either wiped clean or machine washed at a low temperature and then left to dry flat. Do not dry it on a radiator as this will make the liner shrink and curl, thus affecting the fit of the brace. The liner must be completely dry and re-attached to the brace before the brace is put back on the patient.
- In the unlikely event of the brace breaking, please contact the ward physiotherapist as soon as possible for further advice.

## Skin care

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You and your carer should monitor the skin on your back, stomach, under your arms and the tops of your shoulders for any signs of redness that do not fade shortly after the brace is removed. Please consult with your GP if the skin is breaking down or you are aware of any sore areas where the brace has been in contact with the skin.

## Washing and dressing advice

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- As you are unable to get the brace wet, you will be advised by your physiotherapist or occupational therapist on the ward if you are able to have a bath/shower or strip wash.
- You can wash the front of your upper body independently, but you must not twist whilst doing this. You may need assistance from your carer with any areas that you cannot reach without twisting.
- Before putting on your TLSO you will need to be put on a loose-fitting cotton t-shirt with no buttons (it will absorb perspiration, protect your skin and keep your TLSO clean).
- You will be assessed on the ward to see if you need any equipment to help with washing and dressing.



## Washing your hair

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- If you are unable to have a shower, you will need to have your TLSO on and have some assistance from your carer.
- Lean forwards onto a basin, bending at the knees and hips (not the waist). You or your carer can carefully pour water over your hair using a jug.

## Carrying

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- Avoid lifting until advised otherwise by your Consultant or Physiotherapist.
- Spread the load equally - do not carry everything in one hand.

## Pacing of activities

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- Try to do things little and often with regular rests in between.
- Prioritise your tasks and activities – know your limitations and delegate to others appropriately.
- Build up activity levels slowly.

## Driving

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- You need to liaise with your Consultant as to when you can resume driving.
- You can travel as a passenger in a car as long as you can sit comfortably for the length of the journey. If you are going on a long journey you would be advised to have regular stops.
- When travelling in a car ensure that the seat is as far back as possible before you get in. This will increase the space in the passenger footwell and make it easier to get in and out. You can recline the back of the seat as required for comfort.

## Things to avoid

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- Avoid twisting and stooping
- Avoid lying on your stomach
- Avoid lifting heavy objects whilst you are still needing to use the brace
- Avoid low and unsupportive chairs

## Points to remember

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- Do not loosen the brace when wearing it – it needs to be tight to maintain the stability of your spine.
- Discomfort is normal.
- Continue to wear your brace as instructed by the Doctors and Physiotherapists on the ward until advised otherwise by your Consultant.
- If you develop any significant pain, pins and needles or numbness, you should go to A & E.
- In the unlikely event of the brace breaking, please contact the ward physiotherapist as soon as possible for further advice.

## Key reference source:

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TalarMade Limited  
Springwood House  
Foxwood Way  
Chesterfield  
S41 9RN

For further information, please do not hesitate to contact physiotherapy.



## Contact details

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### Physiotherapy Services

Royal Surrey County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust  
Egerton Road,  
Guildford,  
Surrey GU2 7XX

**Telephone:** 01483 464 153

Royal Surrey County Hospital (RSCH) NHS  
Foundation Trust fully subscribes to the National  
Patient Safety Agency (NPSA).

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### PALS and Advocacy contact details

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Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

**Telephone:** 01483 402757

**Email:** [rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Opening hours:** 9.00am–4.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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Author: Sarah Trevail, Katie Grimshaw & Ollie Sell

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