

When can I return to work?

Your return to work will depend on the job that you do. Do not plan to return too quickly after discharge as you will get tired very easily. You will also need to consider how you will travel to and from work. If your work involves long periods of sitting, ensure that the chair gives adequate support. You may want to get an Occupational Health review from your employer. This will allow your workstation to be assessed for the correct setup to avoid stooping or leaning forwards. Please contact us if you require further advice on this matter.

Is there anything further I need to know?

- Plan your activities in advance, take regular breaks and know your limitations.
- Ask for help when needed.
- Avoid unnecessary tasks when possible.
- Where possible carry out tasks at an appropriate height to avoid stooping.
- Have regular items placed within easy reach to avoid over stretching, or ask for assistance when reaching for items on high shelves.
- You may find drinking from a bendy straw helpful as you will not be able to tilt your head backwards.

If you develop any significant pain, pins and needles or numbness, you should go to A&E.

If in the unlikely event of the collar coming off; calmly lie flat on the floor or the bed and call an ambulance.

Key reference source

www.ossur.co.uk

Contact details

If you require any further general advice please contact:

Trauma and Orthopaedics Physiotherapy

Telephone: 01483 571122 **ext** 4153

HOST Therapies

Telephone: 01483 571122 **ext** 2550

PALS and Advocacy contact details

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

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm
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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Wearing a hard collar

Physiotherapy Department



Patient information leaflet

This leaflet will outline why you are wearing your collar; how this will be managed on discharge; and answer some frequently asked questions. It is a general guide and your physiotherapist can answer any specific questions.

Why am I wearing a hard collar?

You have been fitted with a hard collar as you have had an injury to your neck. The collar is designed to reduce the amount of movement allowed in your neck however; it will not completely keep your neck still. Therefore, it is important to avoid trying to move your head/neck with the collar on.

How long will I have to wear it?

Your doctor will advise you on how long you will be wearing the collar. However, it is normally between 6–12 weeks.

Can I take my collar off at any point?

You will need to wear your collar 24 hours a day. It will only be taken off during collar care that you will receive by a health care professional. Depending on the situation, you may be asked to attend an outpatient setting, or it may be carried out in your home.

How do I keep my neck and collar clean?

The health care professional, who could be a nurse, physiotherapist or occupational therapist, will wash your neck during collar care. This will be done a minimum of 3 times a week. The pads will be changed once a week, but maybe changed more

frequently if required. Shaving will be carried out as required; you will find that having a fresh sharp razor or a clean electric razor is easiest for all involved.

Why is my neck painful?

It is reasonable to expect some pain because of your injury. However if you experience a change in your pain or a sudden onset of acute pain seek medical advice. Taking regular pain relief and having regular rests should help to keep pain under control.

My collar feels uncomfortable!

The collar will be a snug fit especially when lying flat on your back. It is nearly impossible to fit a correctly sized collar too tight! Do let health care professionals know if there are any areas that feel tender or sore, this maybe due to skin irritation and can be treated with special cream or padded out with appropriate dressings. Please do not fiddle or tug at either the collar or the straps. It will be tight but it should not be painful.

Why is my walking different?

As your head and neck movements are restricted this will affect your vision and balance. You may want to take someone with you if you are planning to walk outside whilst you adjust to wearing the collar. Take extra care on the stairs as you will not be able to bend or turn your head to see your feet. Use banisters/rails when able.

What about washing and dressing?

We would advise that you wash at the sink as it maybe slippery trying to get into a bath

or shower. Discuss with your health care professional whether a shower is possible and the co-ordination of washing hair prior to a pad change. **Please keep the collar straps dry.** The straps are Velcro and will lose their grip if wet. Other hair washing aids are easily available to buy on the internet. Otherwise, a dry shampoo is recommended. You may find that wearing loose fitting tops are easier to wear.

When can I drive again?

You will have to wait until the doctor informs you that the collar is no longer required. It is also advisable that you check with your insurance company. When travelling by car as a passenger take regular breaks and ensure that the headrest is at the appropriate height. This will give you maximum support. Please take extra care if you decide to travel on public transport. Being in over-crowded places and on modes of transport which maybe jerky could increase your risk of further injury or falls.

What about lifting?

When carrying lighter loads or when reaching, use both arms together and keep the load close to your body. Where possible split the load into lighter amounts to reduce the stress on your neck and back whilst lifting (e.g. when doing laundry). **Do not bend from your back.** This will cause you to stoop and put pressure on the affected area. Bend from the knees instead and be careful! **If you feel that effort is required to lift an item, the load is too heavy!** This should be avoided to prevent extra strain on the neck.