

Caring for Your Child - The Pectus Carinatum Brace

What is pectus carinatum?

Pectus carinatum is a pediatric condition that gives the chest a “bowed out” or “pigeon chest” appearance. This happens when there is an overgrowth of costal cartilages which connect the ribs to the sternum. If your child’s pectus carinatum is severe, it can prevent him from exhaling completely. Pectus carinatum does not usually affect the structure of the heart or lungs.

How does the pectus carinatum brace work?

The brace can be used to treat pectus carinatum. It has 2 cushioned plates. One rests on the most “bowed out” part of the chest and the other is in the middle of the back. The plates are connected to an aluminum bar with adjustable ratchets. The front of the brace puts pressure on the chest wall while the back of the brace keeps it stable. The constant pressure will slowly mold the chest wall into the correct position. The brace can be used to treat pectus carinatum up to the age of 16.

How often and how long will my child need to wear the brace?

The brace is designed to be worn either on top of or under a t-shirt, depending upon what is most comfortable for your child. The brace should be worn at least 12 hours in a 24 hour period, day or night. The more it is worn, the better the results. You and your child will need to make sure there is enough pressure on the chest. There should be a red mark over the chest where the cushioned plate is. This mark should be there for several hours after your child removes the brace.

The typical length of time needed to wear the brace for full correction will vary from person to person. On average, the brace will need to be worn for six-to-24 months. After the chest becomes a more normal shape, the brace will still need to be worn less often in “retainer mode.”

Does the brace hurt?

Most children say their chest is slightly sore after the initial brace fitting. This can be treated with ibuprofen or paracetamol.

Your child may experience slight redness and pain on the front of the chest from the brace. This is normal. If the brace causes a scratch or sore that is open, this is **NOT** normal and the brace should be removed.

If you remove the brace and the reddened area on the chest does not “blanche,” you need to remove the brace and call the office. Blanching is when you press on the red area and it temporarily turns white and then back to red. Do not put the brace back on until the reddened area can blanch.

If the problem continues, the child should not replace the brace until he/she can be seen in the clinic for adjustments.

If your child has trouble sleeping with the brace on, try using memory foam or a similar-type padding over the mattress.

Girls should not use the brace with an underwire bra as this may cause pain and skin breakdown.

If you have questions or concerns about the brace, please call the Clinic: +44 1223 479125 or +44 7582 550292

Where will my child get the brace fitted and adjusted?

Your child will need to return to the surgery clinic 4 to 6 weeks after the initial brace fitting. After that, your child should have the brace adjusted every 3 to 4 months until his/her therapy is complete.

Is the brace uncomfortable?

It takes some time to get used to the brace, but your child should not be uncomfortable. Your child will start using the brace for short periods of time at first. He/she will wear it a little bit longer each day. If your child complains about the brace hurting, make an appointment in the clinic to have it checked.

How should I take care of my child's skin while using the brace?

When taking off the brace, check the skin for redness and skin breakdown. It is normal to see redness on the skin where the brace pads sit. This redness may stay on the skin even when your child is not wearing the brace. You should **NOT** see skin breakdown. If you see skin breakdown, remove the brace and call the specialist that fitted the brace. Don't use lotion on skin where the pads rest because this could soften the skin and cause skin breakdown.

How do I clean the brace?

You can clean the pectus carinatum brace with rubbing alcohol or mild soap and water. Heat will ruin the brace. Do not put it in the dryer or use a blow dryer on it.

Is there a chance it won't work?

The brace is usually very effective. To get the best results, your child needs to wear the brace exactly as the doctor orders. In few cases the brace doesn't work, your doctor will then discuss other surgical approaches with you.