



# Hip Spica – used to stabilise the Hip/Pelvis following surgery

We have yet to meet anyone who gets enthusiastic about hip spicas. They make the patient very heavy, can be incredibly itchy – especially in hot weather – and fairly smelly.

It sounds really bad doesn't it?

But Hip Spicas work! The period of time inside the hip spica needs to be endured, so we put together a few tips to make things a little easier.

We hope you have a chance to see this ahead of time to enable you to prepare.

# Getting Comfortable

- Sitting can be a problem with a Hip Spica – it depends on whether the legs are opened out, and whether the hip angle is also opened out.



- This seating support from Sidhil is useful to put on a sofa, effectively taking up the difference in angle

- A large bean bag is guaranteed to work – whatever the shape of the hip spica. Getting one with a leather cover is a good idea – much easier to mop up spills.



# Getting Around

- It is important to understand that there is not really a completely safe way of travelling in a vehicle. This is because seat belt safety assumes that the person is sitting up and able to flex at the hips. A hip spica makes this impossible



- You will need to get hold of a special needs buggy or wheelchair that has a reclining backrest, that preferably also tilts forward to allow a more upright position. The hospital will not always have anything available for you, but you can hire wheelchairs like this to enable you to get around.

# How do they go to the toilet?

- Some of the braver people ask this when they see someone in a hip spica. Most find it easier to use nappies/pads – mainly because it is the only way to maintain a level of dignity.

# What about dressing?

- Trousers and skirts can be made to work, but require some sewing skill. The common way to convert them is to cut up the seams on the inside of both legs (in the case of trousers) and on the outside seam on one leg. A long strip of narrow velcro is then sewn up either side – hook one side and loop the other side – to allow the seam to be re-attached. Once the completed garment is wrapped around and attached together, most people can't tell the difference. Some people even ask if the bar is removable for dressing!

# What about lifting and handling?

- It is very important to avoid lifting if you can. The hospital will normally send you home with a hoist sling. Unfortunately you cannot have a hoist everywhere, and some chairs don't allow a hoist to get very close.
- The most useful type of hoist for the bedroom is a temporary overhead hoist like this one. This runs on a track, giving plenty of floor space to place the wheelchair in position
- If your social services contact is unable to help, you may be able to hire a hoist system like this. It takes only a few minutes to install and takes the strain off your back



# More lifting and handling.

- Some Surgeons make the hip spica bar strong enough to take the child's weight. Check this before the hip spica is fitted, as it makes changing and dressing very much easier if you can use the hoist to lift the lower half of the hip spica.



# Sleeping.

- There is not a great deal of choice about which position to sleep in.....
- It is important to relieve the pressure on the heels, otherwise the full weight of the hip spica will be resting on them
- The weight of the bed clothes also creates pressure on the toes, so a roll helps to avoid this – as shown below



# Keeping the plaster in good condition

- The very nature of the material used to make the hip spica means that it will wear down, and the edges can be quite sharp. Try to make sure you get 2 or 3 spare rolls of Plaster Edge Padding and the Waterproof edging tape from the Plaster Team to bring home with you. You can then wrap around any sharp edges and keep the plaster comfortable for the patient.
- These materials are not very easy to get anywhere else, so it is important to keep ahead.
- If you do not feel able to do anything to the plaster, get the surgery team to organise a visit from your local plaster team during the time you are at home – this is much better arranged in advance.
- If you have toileting accidents in the hip spica, you will need to act quickly to avoid sore skin breaking down completely. This is when you may need some professional help.

# Keeping occupied

- This is one of the bigger challenges, but if you have managed to obtain a wheelchair that can wheel up to a table, you are able to engage in many activities.
- Look out for an angle adjustable table – many of the products designed for older people work very well, so a visit to your local mobility shop may be worthwhile.
- Remember that it is important to have some physical exercise, which is almost impossible in a hip spica. Exercise helps to keep the body functions going, so as much arm exercises as possible will be beneficial!

## Share your experience!

If you found something useful or have an idea that could help others – please tell us about it.

You never know – it could almost make having a Hip Spica good fun!

Send an email to:

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