

Pectus carinatum

This leaflet explains more about pectus carinatum bracing. If you have any further questions, please speak to the Orthotist caring for you.

What is pectus carinatum?

Pectus Carinatum (PC) is a chest wall deformity that involves the sternum protruding outwards and is commonly referred to as 'pigeon chest'. It may be central or asymmetrical, meaning one side protrudes more than the other.

The exact cause of PC is unknown. Generally, PC will become noticeable during adolescence as the body undergoes rapid growth. It is primarily a cosmetic concern and those with PC can generally participate in normal activities with no physical limitations.

What is the treatment?

Treatment for PC involves wearing an orthosis (brace) that will gradually correct the shape of the chest. The orthosis, when worn, applies a constant pressure over the chest protrusion to gradually improve the shape of the chest. It is important to remember that wearing the orthosis as directed will provide the best chance of an improvement in the appearance of the chest shape.

Wearing regime:

There are two main phases of brace wear: Corrective and Maintenance phase.

1. Corrective Phase: This typically lasts six to nine months during which the brace is worn 16+ hours per day.
2. Maintenance Phase: Following correction of the protrusion, the appearance of the chest needs to be maintained through growth. The orthosis is to be worn during the night or for 12 hours per day. The chest will still need to be monitored to ensure there is no recurrence of PC. This phase typically lasts a further six to twelve months.

- After the maintenance phase is complete you will begin to wean out of the brace, however, if there is a noticeable change in the appearance of the chest please contact your Orthotist for review.
- The chest orthosis should be removed during physical activity.

Wearing your chest brace:

It is important that the chest orthosis is put on correctly.

1. Firstly, ensure the buckle on one side is fastened and the other is undone.

2. Place the back pad (triangle pad) sitting just under the shoulder blades. Lean up against a wall to help hold the brace in position.
3. Place the front pad over the peak of the chest protrusion.
4. Fasten the open buckle. The chest brace needs to be firm enough to correct the protrusion, with even tension either side.
5. The tension of the brace will need to be gradually increased as your chest starts to flatten and change shape

Things to look for:

- When the chest brace is removed, check the skin to ensure there is no rubbing or broken skin over the protrusion.
- Mild redness is usual and to be expected. It should resolve after not wearing the brace for 30 minutes.
- Feeling pressure whilst wearing the brace is common, however pain should be avoided. If wearing the orthosis results in pain, please contact your orthotist to arrange a review appointment.

Hygiene:

- The chest may become sweaty under the brace. Wash the skin under the brace daily. The brace and covers can also be wiped down with mild soapy water. Please ensure the brace is dry before putting it back on.
- To increase comfort and to prevent skin problems you may wear a cotton vest or t-shirt under the orthosis

Follow up:

Treatment is monitored by orthotic reviews. After your initial Assessment / Fitting appointment you will receive an initial 6-week phone review.

Following this, there will be scheduled reviews to monitor the appearance of your chest, adjust the brace and to discuss wearing times as required:

- Every 3 months over the phone
- Every 6 months face to face

If you miss 3 consecutive appointments without contacting us, another appointment will not be scheduled unless you contact the department.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about orthotics, please contact admin on 020 8487 6056/6033 (Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4pm). Out of hours, please email: orthotics.qmh@stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency.

NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111



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