

Pavlik Harness Caregiver Information and Instructions

A Pavlik harness is used to treat developmental dysplasia of the hip (DDH) in infants typically up to 6 months of age or younger. This is a soft device that helps hold the femoral head (hip ball) in the acetabulum (hip socket) using Velcro straps that fasten around the chest and legs, positioning the legs in the proper position to encourage hip socket development. While in the harness, legs are held up (flexed) and out to the side (abducted). This treatment encourages the socket to form properly as the baby grows. In order for the treatment to be effective, your child should wear the harness for the number of hours prescribed by your doctor. Duration of treatment will be determined by your doctor.



Occasionally, a Pavlik harness may be used for infants with a femur fracture.

Home Care Instructions:

- While your child is being treated in the Pavlik harness, it is very important that you do not remove the harness or adjust the straps, unless you are given specific instructions by your doctor to do so.
- Sponge baths will be necessary while in the harness. Do NOT remove the harness to bathe your child.
- You may slide the washcloth under the straps. If necessary, you can wet a cotton swab (Q Tip) to clean the creases behind the knee. One at a time, remove each foot from the boot for washing and keep the knee flexed in the harness position.
- Protect the legs of the harness when changing diapers to keep them clean and dry.
- You can change your baby's diaper with the Pavlik harness in place. Make sure the straps are kept outside of the diaper.
- Babies should NOT be placed in any position that brings their knees or legs together. This includes swaddling, laying on their side, or placement in any chair/walker that does not allow their knees and legs to fully separate.
- It can be helpful to put some padding, such as a folded blanket, underneath your child while they are in their car seat to allow their legs to remain out to the side as long as they are still able to be strapped in safely.
- The best way to hold your child is with one leg on either side of your body to keep the legs apart or chest to chest with the legs out to each side. We do not recommend using a baby carrier while your child is in the harness.
- Babies can have tummy time while in the harness. They may need a small roll under the chest and trunk.
- Your baby may find it challenging to breastfeed while in the harness, for the first couple of days. It may be easiest to breastfeed in the cradle, cross-cradle, side-lying and football positions. If you have questions, please ask your provider or nurse.

Clothing Changes and Bathing:

- The chest strap, which should always be located at the nipple line, may be opened and closed for clothing changes. When applied correctly, you should be able to place four of your fingers underneath the chest strap.
- The shoulder straps may be opened and closed for clothing changes. You should be able to place 1-2 fingers underneath the straps when closed, and they should be tight enough to keep the chest strap at the nipple line.
- The small straps located around the ankle and lower leg may also be opened and closed for changing socks and leggings. If you are placing socks or leggings, work with one foot at a time.
- The straps that go from the chest strap to the straps around the legs should be modified by your doctor only. Parents/caregivers should NOT adjust them.

Cleaning the Pavlik Harness:

- Clean the harness while it is on your baby.
- Use a baby wipe to clean the soiled area and allow to air dry. Mild detergent on a damp cloth will also work.
- Do NOT wash harness and dry in the drier (it will shrink). Air/drip dry will take too long.
- You may not be able to keep the harness perfectly clean. Remember, this is TEMPORARY.

When to Call Your Doctor:

- If your baby is not moving a lower leg (kicking it out). REMOVE THE HARNESS IMMEDIATELY AND CALL YOUR DOCTOR RIGHT AWAY.
- If any redness or blistering develops due to the harness rubbing on their skin.
- If the harness is not fitting correctly or the position of the legs seems different.
- If your child has a big growth spurt and the hips appear to be more flexed than where your doctor put them.

Follow Up Appointments:

You will have frequent follow up appointments for repeat ultrasounds, x-rays and for harness adjustments while in treatment. After the harness and/or additional bracing, you will continue to see your orthopaedic provider for the duration of your child's growth. You can reach the appointment line by calling 510-428-3238.

Contact Numbers:

If you have a question or concern about your child, please call us:

- Weekdays (8-4:30pm): 510-428-3238 and ask to speak to your surgeon's nurse
- After 4:30pm or Weekend/Holiday: 510-428-3000 (main hospital number) and ask to speak to the orthopedic resident on-call

Please visit www.hipdysplasia.org or <https://orthokids.org> for more information.