

pavlik harness

Your baby is being placed in a Pavlik Harness to help treat the hip condition known as developmental dysplasia of the hip (DDH). The goal of this treatment is to keep the hips **flexed** and **abducted** in the frog-leg position for *approximately* six weeks of full-time wear, followed by part-time wear. This will encourage the development of the head of the femur (ball) to be rounded and fit into a well-formed acetabulum (socket).

applying the harness:

- The straps will be marked in the clinic so you will know where to re-fasten them.
- The harness should be worn at all times, unless otherwise instructed by your provider.
- Lay out the harness and then place your baby on the harness. Bring the **chest strap (A)** under the arms and across the nipple line. Leave room for two fingers to rotate under this strap.
- Fasten the **shoulder straps (B)** (crossed in the back) up over each shoulder. Leave room under the top of each shoulder strap for one finger under this strap.
- Place the feet in the **booties (C)** and fasten the top strap just under the knee. Fasten the bottom strap. Leave room for one finger under each strap.
- Fasten the **flexion straps (D)** (pulls knees up). The strap and the buckle are colored coded to match: red to red; blue to blue. Pull the strap up to the line marked by the doctor and fasten. Next fasten the **abduction straps** (behind the legs) (pulls the legs apart and to the side) to the appropriate mark.



Image via Wheaton Brace Company

recheck daily for fit

- Check the harness fit when your baby is calm. You should be able to place one finger under the shoulder strap, two fingers under the chest strap and one finger under the bootie straps.
- It is important to not adjust the straps further than the mark made by the provider.
- While feeding your baby, you may loosen the chest strap for a short period of time.
- Always loosen the chest strap immediately if your baby's breathing is restricted. Remember to return to the mark later.
- Observe the feet and legs for movement. If something does not look right or if there is not active movement of the legs, remove the harness and call our office.

bathing

- The majority of the time, full time harness wear is strictly encouraged for at least 6 weeks. You are encouraged to sponge bathe around the harness. If necessary, you may remove one leg of the harness, at the bootie strap, for quick diaper area cleaning.
- Your baby should be able to straighten his/her legs and kick easily when out of the harness. Be sure to refasten as soon as possible.

diapering

- Can be accomplished without removal of the harness. Lift by sliding your hand under the hips; do not lift by the feet.
- Clean and dry thoroughly, especially in the skin folds.
- Avoid powder and lotions as they may cake in the skin folds and cause a sore.
- Always fasten the diaper under the harness straps.
- With every diaper change, gently massage the area around the baby's knees and ensure the felt is between the buckle and baby's skin at the knee to prevent redness or pressure.

washing the harness

- Washing of the harness is usually not necessary, and should only be performed if instructed by your provider.
- Wash by hand with a mild detergent.
- Allow to drip-dry; do not place in the dryer. Will most likely take several hours.

dressing

- A T-shirt or onesie should be worn under the harness. It is important there are no wrinkles in clothing as wrinkles can cause skin irritation and possibly a sore.
- When changing, remove only the chest strap and shoulder straps of the harness. This can be a good time for quick sponge bathing.
- Loose-fitting clothes, such as long gowns or a dress will fit over the harness.
- Loose-fitting socks without tight elastic may be worn over the harness in cooler weather.
- Wearing a bib will help keep the harness clean.

comfort and movement

- Your baby should sleep on his/her back.
- Continue to hold and cuddle your baby just like you did before the harness was worn. Hold in a comfortable position without forcing the legs together.
- Check to make sure that there is active foot, leg and toe movement.
- The harness will not interfere with sitting in a car seat.
- The harness does not cause pain but may be uncomfortable at first. It may take two to three days for your baby to adjust. If you are concerned, please call our office.
- **Do not swaddle the baby when in the Pavlik Harness.**

call our office at 937-641-3010 if...

- Your baby does not actively move legs, feet or toes.
- Your baby does not move his/her arms.
- Your baby does not straighten his/her legs and kick when out of the harness.
- You are uncertain of the harness position or need help putting it back on after removal.
- You have any questions or concerns.

This handout is for general information only and should not be considered complete. For more specific information, please ask your child's health care provider.

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