

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.

Where will my child get the brace fitted and adjusted?

CHOP has a brace shop in the basement of the Seashore House called NOPCO. Check with your insurance company to see if it covers the brace with the NOPCO brace shop. You may need to choose another brace shop. The specialists (orthotists) in the shop will custom fit the brace for your child. It can be adjusted as needed. Your child will need to return to the brace shop and 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 therapy is complete.

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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 will wear it a little bit longer each day. If your child complains about the brace hurting, make an appointment with the brace shop 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.

How long will my child have to wear the brace?

The brace is usually worn for at least 2 years or until your child's growth is completed.

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.

Follow up appointments:

Call the surgery clinic at 215-590-2730 to make follow-up appointments usually every 6 months during treatment.

Call the brace shop for any concerns about the fit and comfort of the brace. The NOPCO brace shop number is: 215-590-7702.

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