

PAVLIK HARNESS - Use and Care

Geelong Orthotics Geelong Hospital Paediatric Orthopaedic Unit

Developmental dysplasia (or dislocation) of the hip (**DDH**) is an abnormal development of the hip joint. The ball at the top of the thighbone is not stable within the hip socket and the ligaments of the hip joint may also be stretched and loose.

Treatment

Babies with DDH often need to wear a brace. The Pavlik Harness is one type of brace used to treat DDH. It has straps that are fastened around the baby's legs and held up by shoulder and chest straps. This holds the hips and knees up with the legs apart. This is the best position for the hip joint to be in. It allows contact between the thigh and hip bones and helps strengthen the muscles and ligaments of the hip while it is developing.



When does your baby wear the harness?

Your surgeon or paediatrician may advise that your baby wears the harness either:

- 24 hours a day without removing it at all, **OR**
- All the time except when bathing.

Getting used to the harness

- It takes some babies a couple of days to get use to the harness. Some babies may cry a little or seem unsettled for the first couple of nights. This should settle down after a few days.

Hygiene and skin care

- If your doctor has said that the harness must be on 24 hours a day, it can not be removed for bathing. Your baby will then need a sponge bath. The Orthotist will show you how to do this. Please try to always keep the harness dry.
- If you are allowed to remove the harness for bathing. Then only undo the Velcro straps to remove it. Do not adjust or undo the metal buckles.
- When bathing your baby pay particular attention to the creases behind the knees and hip creases. Dry the skin well with a towel before reapplying the harness.
- Monitor your baby's skin daily. Take care to clean your baby's skin and if you notice any skin irritation or redness, contact the Orthotist.

Nappies and clothing

- Your baby can wear normal nappies under the Pavlik Harness.
- When changing the nappy do not hold your baby's feet together, this will move the hips from the correct position.
- Loose fitting clothes that do not pull the knees together should be worn over the harness.

Cleaning the harness

- The Pavlik Harness should be washed only if **ABSOLUTELY** necessary. Remove the soiled section of the brace (remember how it is attached), wash in cold water with soap and gently clean with a nail brush.
- Blot dry with a towel, a hair dryer on low heat can be used.
- **Do not** tumble dry the harness (it may shrink).

If you have any problems or questions about the Pavlik Harness, please do not hesitate to call us.

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