



British Scoliosis Society

Full-Time Bracing Patient Information Sheet

Why do I need a brace?

Braces for scoliosis reduce the risk of the curve getting bigger and needing surgery

Will the brace work?

There is excellent scientific evidence that full-time braces reduce the risk of patients requiring surgery. The brace doesn't work for everyone but is more likely to work if it is worn for at least 20 hours every day.

What is the brace made of?

The brace is made of plastic and usually has a foam lining. It is flexible enough to open either at the front or back and fastened usually with Velcro straps. Your brace is specifically designed to control YOUR spinal curvature and should not be worn by anyone else. It is likely to be a little bit uncomfortable to start with, but you will get used to it.

How does a Full-Time Brace work?

The brace pushes on the curve which makes it smaller whilst you are wearing the brace. It needs to be worn for at least 20 hours every day including at night. It can be removed for short periods of time during the day especially for doing activities that may be difficult to do in your brace such as sport, dance and physical exercise.

Why does a Full-Time Brace work?

X-rays at the hospital are usually taken with you standing and your spinal doctor will measure the size of your curve as an 'angle' – the bigger the curve, the bigger the angle. A straight spine is zero degrees, 10 degrees is large enough for a curve to be called a 'scoliosis'. Curves that are 20-40 degrees are usually treated with a brace and at 50 degrees, your spinal doctor may discuss the option of surgery. Full-time braces work by applying pressure to the spine, pushing it into a straighter position and resisting the forces which try to make the curve larger.

Getting your Full-Time Brace

A Spinal Orthotist is a specialist who designs and fits spinal braces.

Visit 1 – BRACE MEASUREMENT: The first visit will be where measurements are taken to allow the Orthotic team to design your brace which will then be made.



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Visit 2 – BRACE FITTING: You will return after a few weeks to have the brace fitted. Small adjustments may be needed to get the best correction of your scoliosis curve or to make the brace more comfortable. The Orthotist will mark a line on each Velcro strap to help you know how tight to have the brace.

You will have an x-ray wearing your brace either at the hospital visit when the brace is fitted or a few weeks later.

You will see one of the Orthotists usually every 3-6 months whilst you are wearing the brace to adjust your brace as you grow.

For your appointments, normal underwear should be worn and your modesty will always be protected. If you have long hair, please bring a hair bobble or clips to fasten your hair up.

Putting on your Full-Time Brace

1. The Orthotist will show you how to put the brace on and take it off correctly. It is essential that a seamless, protective, body socks or a close-fitting cotton t-shirt is worn under the brace to minimise the risk of skin irritation. Open the brace and put it around you positioning the waist section between your ribs and the top of your pelvis;
2. It is essential to tighten your brace when lying down so lie down on a firm surface and bend your knees slightly towards your chest;
3. Stretch yourself so you are as long as possible;
4. Loosely fasten all the Velcro straps making sure no straps are twisted;
5. Fasten each strap to the mark on the Velcro starting at the lowest strap and working upwards.
6. Your Orthotist will mark on the straps how tight they should be and may suggest a slightly looser position to start with, to allow you to get used to the brace and make it more comfortable.

'Breaking-in' your Full-Time Brace

Gradually increase the amount of time you wear to brace each day over 5-7 days. Gradually increase the tension in the straps up to the maximum you were shown at the initial fitting visit. Your brace will feel tight at first but will improve over time.

How long will I need to wear a brace for?

They are usually worn for between one and a half and three and a half years. Bracing is stopped once you have finish growing so it depends how much growing you have left to do.

As you grow, you may need another brace if it is getting too tight. This will be made in the same way as the previous brace, and you will continue to wear your old brace until it is ready.



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Areas of Redness

Some minor surface redness is common and should fade after removing the brace and should become less over time. Make sure you are wearing a seamless or close-fitting a cotton t-shirt or vest under the brace and there are no wrinkles. If redness or irritation persists, contact your Spinal Orthotic Team.

Wearing your Full-Time Brace

Once successfully broken-in, the wearing goal for your Full-Time Brace should be **at least 20 hours a day**. This means the brace should be worn at school and in bed at night.

Do I have to wear the brace on holiday?

If the brace is not worn for a period of time whilst you grow, the curve may get worse, so it is important that you wear your brace even when on holiday.

Caring for your Full-Time Brace

It is important to follow these guidelines on caring for your new brace:

- The T-shirt or body vest you wear under the brace should be changed daily to reduce the risk of skin irritation.
- The inside of your brace should be wiped daily with a damp cloth and the plastic parts of your brace should be cleaned with a mild soap solution (ensuring any residue is wiped off with a damp cloth to avoid skin irritation).

What do I do if the brace doesn't seem to fit me anymore or gets damaged?

Please contact your Spinal Orthotic Team