Your consultant has advised that you should wear a cervical spine collar

**What is a cervical collar?**
A cervical Collar is a neck brace that limits the movement of your neck while providing you with support.

We mainly use Aspen collars at The Walton centre, however other types are available and maybe required, a spinal nurse specialist should clarify this with you prior to your discharge.

The Aspen collar is a two-piece rigid neck brace, held together by Velcro straps. The brace support is provided by plastic on the outside and soft pads to the inside.

**Why do I need it?**
Cervical collars are required for multiple reasons, the most common being for fracture in the neck (broken bone) and the collar is used for management of the fracture but they can also be used for support pre or post-surgery.

The cervical collar will encourage correct spinal alignment and aim to protect you from developing further problems.
How does it work?
The cervical collar works by reducing your ability to move your neck, immobilising your head and neck. This reduces movement of the bones in the neck to promote and aid healing.

The cervical collar will help your neck support the weight of your head while the bones, soft tissues and muscles in your neck heal. Following cervical spine (neck) surgery or sustaining a fracture the collar will help keep your neck bones in the correct position while you heal.

How long will I need it for?
The reason why you require the collar will determine the length of time you require it for. Your consultant will make this decision.

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How should the collar fit?
It is important you are completely comfortable with your collar prior to discharge, please ensure you ask to see one of the Spinal nurse specialists should you require more support or advice.

You will be measured and fitted with an appropriately sized cervical collar. The front piece of the collar will sit under your chin and upon your chest, the back panel will sit at the base of your skull and extend to your shoulders. The two pieces are held together by Velcro and together completely encase and cover your neck. It’s important to wear your cervical collar properly to get the maximum benefit.

The cervical collar should be tight enough to prevent movement of your neck, for example restrict ‘yes’ and ‘no’ movements however not completely restrictive so that it affects you’re breathing or swallowing.

Changing the collar
You should remove the collar once a day to ensure you skin is clean, dry and there are no areas of irritation.
You will be provided with a spare cervical collar, unless you have been told otherwise by your consultant you should wear the cervical collar in the shower and change this to a dry one, once you have finished showering.
It is important to refrain from unnecessary movement of your neck during this process:

- Ensure your shoulders, neck and head are completely supported (either by a chair or bed).
- Remove the cervical collar by releasing one of the Velcro straps, pull the front panel of the collar away from your neck and slowly slide out the back panel from one side of your neck.
- Have a family member, career or mirror to hand to look at your neck and ensure there is no irritation or areas for concern.
- Ensure your neck is completely dry
- Apply the dry/new collar by first sliding in the back panel behind your head and secondly placing the front piece of the collar around your neck. Secure the two pieces together with the Velcro straps.

Key points to remember:

- Unless you have been informed otherwise you should wear this collar while showering and be provided with a spare to change into following the shower.
- You should change the collar while lying down with your head/neck and shoulders fully supported
- Your chin should not sit inside or stick out over the collar, but flush with the collar edge
- The collar should rest comfortably against your body, with only the padded areas touching your skin.
- The collar should be facing the right way to give you the required support
- Hair should be placed on the outside of the collar.
- You should keep your neck clean and dry.
- Your collar should be removed daily for cleaning of your neck, on doing this you should check to make sure there are no areas of skin irritation.
- The pads and plastic of the collar can be cleaned with mild soap and water.
- Please remove any jewellery from around your neck to prevent the collar resting on this and causing you skin irritation or sores.
Please contact the spinal nurse specialists for any advice or support required while you require a cervical spine collar.

Nurse specialists are available Monday to Friday between the hours of 9am to 5pm

**Tel: 0151 529 8853**

Out of the stated hours please contact the ward you were admitted to on the telephone number you were provided on discharge.
For practical advice our Patient Experience Team can be of assistance. Contact Patient Experience Team on 0151 529 6100, email PatientExperienceteam@thewaltoncentre.nhs.uk or visit www.thewaltoncentre.nhs.uk

Alternatively, log on to: www.neurosupport.org.uk or call; 0151 298 2999 for advice and information for people with neurological conditions and their carers.