

Body Jacket Care & Use Guide

Body jackets are almost as varied as the conditions they treat. Either rigid or semirigid, body jackets are most frequently constructed of thermoplastic materials as opposed to orthopedic corsets which are fabricated from heavy cotton or other fabric. In some instances, body jackets are fashioned from flexible leather that is molded and snugly laced.

The introduction of thermoformed plastic has created numerous advantages in fabricating jackets which must accurately conform to body contours. Thermoforming distributes pressure over a wide surface and increases comfort while avoiding tissue breakdown. The molded plastic body jacket is easy to keep clean; however, foam liners require regular attention to avoid retaining body odors.

Range of Conditions

A body jacket may foster healing after back surgery, provide temporary or longterm bracing, employ a combination of pressure and support to correct certain deformities, or control movement of the back and neck.

Major advances in materials and an increased understanding of body mechanics have led to far more functional body jackets in recent years. Depending upon the condition and prescribed treatment, jackets may be worn for weeks or years, full time or only during certain periods of the day. Body jackets constitute an important part of treatment options for musculoskeletal problems in the torso area. Your physician will determine how long and when you are to wear the jacket.

Components Vary

Intended use largely dictates the design and construction of a body jacket. Because it is lightweight, strong, and readily molded, thermoplastic is employed most often in modular construction of complete spinal systems and appenditures. A basic design can be accompanied by an extensive number of component options. The orthotist then modifies the unit and fits it according to the patient's precise measurements, adjusting pressure and adding or deleting specific components.

Some body jackets may include upright posts and an extension to restrict mobility of the head,

neck, and/or back. Adding a halo significantly reduces movement of the head and neck. A more restrictive type of body jacket is often prescribed postsurgically in cases involving fractures, hardware installation and fusion, or disc problems.

A special grouping of jackets is recommended in the treatment of scoliosis, or curvature of the spine. These styles use a combination of pressure and padding to help correct or avoid the further progression of spinal curves. Body jackets are also valuable in altering postural abnormalities such as rounded shoulders and swayed back.

Most modern body jackets use Velcro for simplified application and removal. They are designed with equal emphasis on comfort and function so that wearing them is as pleasant and non-restrictive as possible. In some instances, use of a body jacket is also coupled with an exercise program to achieve rehabilitation goals.

As with any orthosis, wearing a body jacket in the manner prescribed and for the times of day or period indicated is vital to the overall effectiveness of the device.

Personal Hygiene Is Important

Skin which comes in contact with a body jacket, or any other orthosis, should be washed thoroughly and monitored on a daily basis. After cleansing and rinsing, the skin should be dried completely before the jacket is put on. It is usually advisable to wear a cotton T-shirt, or other suitable undergarment which is changed daily, to avoid direct contact between the body jacket and the skin. However, special attention should be taken to make sure the undergarment does not wrinkle and cause irritation.

A properly fit orthosis shouldn't irritate the skin or cause sores. Patients may experience some initial discomfort until they become conditioned to wearing a body jacket, but any rash, sore, blister, or excessive rubbing should be reported promptly to the orthotist. Any bacterial or fungal infection should be treated by the attending physician.

Care of the Body Jacket

If a body jacket is to function properly, it must be maintained. Straps, stays, closures, and

other aspects of the jacket should be kept in good condition; the orthotist should be notified if a part needs replacement or alteration.

Specific instructions will be provided for cleaning the body jacket according to the material or combination of materials used to fabricate it. In general, however, cloth garments should be hand-washed regularly in warm water and mild soap, and then thoroughly rinsed. Soap remaining within the garment can irritate the skin. Plastic orthoses should be cleaned frequently with either alcohol or mild soap and water. A plastic orthosis shouldn't be soaked in water. Dry a plastic orthosis with a clean towel. Never place an orthosis in a clothes dryer or in front of a heater or damage could result. Velcro straps will not stick when wet. When washing, have Velcro fastened onto itself to prevent picking up lint.

Scheduled Visits

Periodic visits may be established to make certain the body jacket is both comfortable and doing its job. The orthotist will check at various intervals to verify that the jacket fits properly, isn't causing undue pressure, and stays in good repair.

In the case of body jackets used to treat scoliosis, visits on a regular basis are required to monitor the degree of spinal curve and the jacket's effectiveness in providing correction or containing further deviation.

It is vital to maintain the schedule of appointments so that the physician, orthotist, and patient are all assured that the body jacket is offering maximum support, comfort, and assistance. It is also important to maintain a relatively consistent weight. Your orthosis was customized for your weight and dimension. Any significant weight gain or loss may cause an improper fit. You will need to visit us if this should occur. Growing youngsters should be monitored at regular intervals to maintain a proper fit.

Patients who have questions or problems should contact our office promptly without waiting for their next appointment. Our staff is always happy to respond to all concerns.

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