

FACT SHEET: THE PAVLIK HARNESS

The Pavlik harness is a way to treat DDH. It is a soft harness that is typically used for babies up to the age of 6 months. The Pavlik harness holds the baby's legs in a "frog" position with the knees bent and the legs apart and allows the legs to move freely. This position helps hold the hip joint in the correct position, helping the hips to develop properly.

DO NO ADJUST the harness straps unless you have been instructed to by your doctor or orthotist.

How Long will my Baby Wear the Harness?

It depends on the exam and your child's ultrasound results as to how long they will remain in the brace, usually about 6-12 weeks. Your baby will likely have to wear the harness for 23-24hrs per day depending on the instruction of your doctor. This is based on your baby's hip examination.

What Happens when my Baby gets bigger?

The orthotist and doctor will adjust your Pavlik harness to ensure it is fitting properly. If you feel that it is getting too small, please call the orthotist and arrange for an appointment to have it adjusted.

When Can I take the Harness Off?

When the hip is determined to be stable by the doctor, the orthotist will show you how to remove the harness for bathing. This means that for one hour per day, your baby can be out of Pavlik Harness. This is a good time for photos, stretching, skin to skin time, and a good time to check the baby's skin for any marks or redness.

How Do I give my Baby a Bath?

If your baby is in the harness for 24hrs per day you can sponge bath any exposed skin. Try to keep the harness dry.

How Do I care for my Baby's Skin?

You should check your baby's skin every day for any redness or breakdown. If you noticed any irritation you can tuck a piece of soft fabric under the brace. You can moisturize your baby's skin daily. As your baby grows you may need to pay attention to creases of the skin in the groin as these can become challenging to wash.

What Can my Baby Wear Underneath the Harness?

When your allowed to come out of the harness for one hour per day you can put one layer of clothing underneath it. The best clothing is a snap button onesie so that is easy to change the diaper. Loose-fitting clothes that do not pull the knees together can be worn over the harness.

How Do I Change the Diaper?

Your baby can wear normal diapers under the Pavlik Harness. When changing the diaper, do not hold your baby's feet together as this will move the hips from the correct position, instead lift the baby by the bum. Try leaving the diaper tabs close until you have them fed under the harness as they often stick to the harness. You can use cloth diapers but suggest using the ones that snap on the side rather than pull up.

How Do I Breast feed?

You will be able to continue breastfeeding when using the Pavlik Harness. You might need to try some different positions until you find one that is comfortable for both you and your baby. Many mothers find it easier to use the football hold while their baby is in the Pavlik harness. It may take a little bit longer for your baby to burp as the strap of the harness is quite thick.

How Do I clean the Harness?

The Pavlik Harness should be washed only if absolutely necessary. During the time the harness is on 24hrs per day you can spot clean the harness with a damp cloth or wet wipe. If you are able to take the baby out of the harness you can wash the harness in cold water with soap and gently clean with a nail brush or in the washing machine on a delicate cycle. You may hang it dry or dry it with a hair dryer on low heat. **It is not recommended to** tumble dry the harness (it may shrink), but if necessary do so on a delicate cycle on low heat. The straps are marked by your orthotist, for ease in the washer you may want to fasten the Velcro.

Can my Baby go in a Car Seat?

Yes, your baby will fit and be safe to travel in a regular car seat.

Can my baby go in a Carrier?

Yes, you can use a carrier for your baby. It is preferred that you do not use a "sling" type carrier as it can pull the hips inward.

Will this Hurt My Baby?

All babies are different, some may be fussier during the first 24-48hrs. This is quite normal and will go away.

Can my Baby still do Tummy time?

Yes! At first you may want to lie your baby on your chest and then progress from there. We want you to play and interact with your baby to help encourage their growth and development.

What is the Risk of wearing a Pavlik Harness?

You want to make sure that your baby is kicking both legs. Make sure your baby is trying to straighten their legs at the knees and hips with equal movement. Femoral nerve palsy is a very rare problem that can happen when using a Pavlik Harness. If you notice your baby stops kicking call the orthotist or doctor as soon as possible. You also want to check the harness is not blocking circulation to your baby's feet. You want their feet to feel warm and be pink in colour.