

Let's Talk About...

Care of Your Child in a Pavlik Harness

What is a Pavlik harness?

The Pavlik harness is a type of brace that is most commonly used for babies who have hip **dysplasia** (dis-plā-ZH-ēā). Hip dysplasia is a type of hip disorder. The harness may also be used for babies with a broken leg. The harness gently keeps your baby's hips and knees bent (flexed) and thighs spread apart. Your child's orthopedic surgeon will tell you how long your baby must wear the harness.

This handout explains how to care for your child while they are wearing a Pavlik harness.

Will my baby be uncomfortable?

No. The Pavlik harness is not painful to wear. Your baby may be unsettled for the first 24–48 hours. Wearing the harness does not hurt.

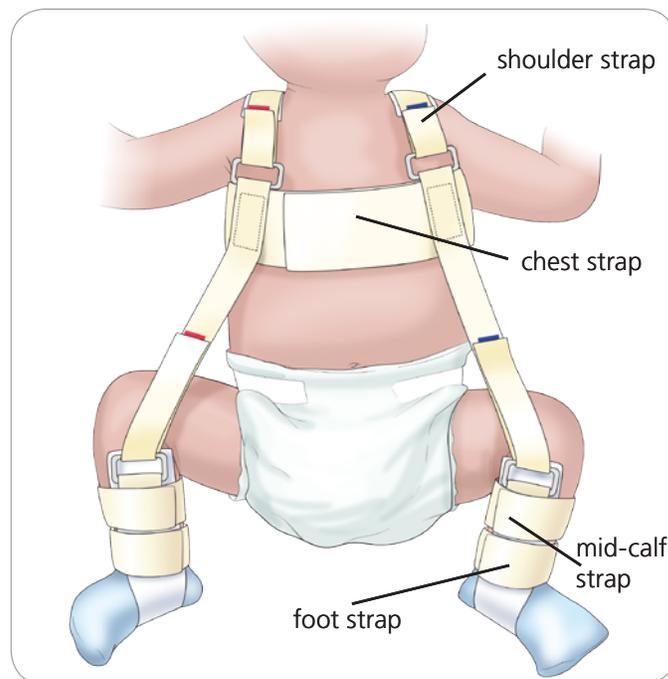
Dressing your baby with a Pavlik harness

Dress your baby in the following:

- Onesie and diaper
 - It is best to place the Pavlik harness over an undershirt and a diaper.
- Long socks that extend to the knees
 - Long loose socks worn under the booties protect your child's skin on the legs and feet.

Steps for placement of a Pavlik harness

- 1 Place the Pavlik harness on a safe flat surface.
- 2 Extend all the Velcro adjustment straps away from the chest strap.
- 3 Identify the top and bottom of the harness.
- 4 Place your child on top of the harness with their back facing you.



5 Adjust the chest strap first.

- The chest strap should fit across the nipple line.
- You should be able to fit 2 of your fingers under the chest strap when it is fastened.

6 Bring the shoulder straps over the shoulders.

7 Attach shoulder straps to the chest strap.

8 Place your child's heel in the bootie.

9 Adjust the foot straps.

10 Attach the mid-calf strap.

- For the harness to be effective, both legs should be in the harness.

11 Adjust the straps to the marks placed on the harness.

- Your child's orthopedic surgeon will mark the place on the harness for your child.
- Do not make additional adjustments without the supervision of your orthopedic surgeon.

Steps to remove the Pavlik harness

Remember: Do **not** remove the harness unless instructed to do so by your child's healthcare provider.

- 1 Place your child on a safe flat surface on their back facing you.
- 2 Undo the shoulder straps, one at a time and extend over her head.
- 3 Open the chest, foot and calf Velcro tabs and extend each piece away from your child's body.
- 4 You may lift the feet out of the heel adjustments without altering the hip Velcro straps.
- 5 Leave the harness on the flat surface until you are ready to replace your child into the harness.

Daily care of your baby in a Pavlik harness

- Check your baby's skin daily for irritation. Pay close attention to skin folds and the skin under the straps. If skin irritation or any sign of skin breakdown occurs, notify your healthcare provider.
- Do **not** take the harness off your child for daily bathing. Give your baby a sponge bath instead.
- You may diaper your child as usual without interfering with the harness. Simply fasten the diaper tapes under the straps.

How do I change a diaper?

- 1 Gather your supplies.
- 2 Place your child on her back on a safe flat surface.
- 3 Remove the diaper tabs.
- 4 Clean the skin.
- 5 Remove the soiled diaper.
- 6 Put on a new diaper.
- 7 Replace the diaper tabs.
- 8 Check the adjustment of the harness.

What type of clothing can my baby wear with a Pavlik harness?

Any clothing that fits over the harness may be worn. Some clothing examples that your baby may wear are

one-piece sleeper without feet, some dresses, a large polo shirt, pants or gown that does not restrict moving.

Do I need to limit my baby from any activities?

No. It is not necessary as long as the harness is in place and your baby's thighs stay apart.

Can I use my regular car seat while my child is in the Pavlik harness?

Yes. The safest way to travel in a car is with appropriate restraint. Your child may use the appropriate type of car seat restraint for your child's age and weight. While your baby's legs may press on the sides of the seat, it will not impact the overall benefit of being in a car seat and the Pavlik harness.

Care of the Pavlik harness

A damp washcloth or stiff toothbrush with soap and water can be used to clean the harness while still on the child. The harness should be patted dry with a towel or blown dry with a hair dryer set on a cool setting.

Do **not** remove the harness for cleaning unless instructed to do so by your care provider. If you are instructed to remove it, you may wash the harness on the delicate cycle and allow it to air dry.

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor if you notice any of the following symptoms:

- Your child is unable to actively kick legs.
- Your baby's feet are swollen or puffy, even after the Velcro straps have been loosened.
- The harness appears to be too small.
- Areas of his skin become raw or a rash develops.
- You are having problems adjusting to your child wearing a harness and you would like to talk to someone about your questions and concerns.

How do I call the doctor?

If it's an emergency, go to the nearest emergency room or call **911**.

Otherwise, contact your doctor or nurse. If the office is closed, call the operator at Primary Children's Hospital, 801-662-1000, and ask for the pediatric orthopedist. You can reach the resident at any time.

Should I make a follow-up appointment?

Call your doctor's office as soon as possible for a follow-up appointment.

Your child will be monitored with regular clinic visits and imaging studies. Your doctor will tell you if you may start removing the harness and exactly how many hours each day the harness must be in place.