

After Surgery Helmet Wear and Care FAQs

WHY DOES MY CHILD HAVE TO WEAR A HELMET? HOW DOES IT WORK TO SHAPE HIS/HER HEAD?

Infants have rapid growth of their brain and skull in the first year of life. We can direct the growth to help shape the head by using a helmet. The helmet does not push the head into shape from the outside; rather, it holds where the head shape does not have to widen anymore so that it can encourage the baby's natural growth toward areas that need to be rounded out.

HOW LONG WILL MY CHILD HAVE TO WEAR THE HELMET?

The duration of helmet treatment depends on the individual child. In most cases of helmets used after surgery, the typical time frame in our practice is around 6 months, when the skull bones are healed into a stable shape after a baby's period of rapid growth. Most children wearing helmets will have monthly follow-up visits in the doctor's clinic to track progress and to determine when helmet therapy is done.

WHY DOES THE HELMET NEED TO BE WORN 23 HOURS PER DAY?

The helmet acts as a shape-mold with a predetermined shape so the various pressure points and empty space guides the child's natural brain and skull growth into a symmetric shape. Children at such a young age grow rapidly and sporadically. To insure the best outcome, the helmet must be worn at all times except during bathing.

IS IT PAINFUL? HOW DO CHILDREN USUALLY RESPOND TO THE HELMET?

Helmets are not painful. Children become accustomed to the helmet after a couple of days. The helmet fits closely as a shape-mold, but should not exert painful pressure. Slight red marks can sometimes be seen at the area where the helmet is holding the head shape. If you notice anything concerning about the fit, such as irritated or raw skin, contact your orthotist for an evaluation and adjustment.

DOES A HELMET AFFECT DEVELOPMENT (LEARNING TO WALK, CRAWL, ETC.)?

Helmets have not been noted to cause any developmental problems. The helmets used by licensed orthotic professionals are light and made of medical grade material. We see babies in helmets meet developmental milestones, such as rolling, sitting, crawling and walking.

WILL MY INSURANCE COVER THE HELMET?

The doctor's office and the orthotist's office will help you navigate any insurance issues. Helmets used after surgery are usually covered by insurance. Our team is committed to working with our patients for the best possible outcome.

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO CLEAN THE HELMET?

Due to a combination of sweating, cradle cap, and bacteria, the helmet may develop an unpleasant odor. For helmets that have soft foam spacer pads applied at the neck or forehead, we recommend using isopropyl alcohol applied to a towel and lightly scrubbing the inside and outside of the helmet daily. Please make sure to not let the alcohol touch the small crescent-shaped pads as the pads will release from the helmet. If the helmet does not have the soft foam pads, we recommend applying a small amount of antibacterial dish soap to a wash cloth and cleaning the helmet gently without submerging. Rinse the helmet thoroughly and set in front of a fan for two to three hours so the helmet can dry. Please do not wash the helmet more than one time per week. If cleaning the helmet once per week with dishwashing soap, we also recommend cleaning the helmet daily with alcohol to keep the helmet sanitary. Please refrain from using scented alcohol as it can cause skin irritation.

