

Miami J Collar

Information and Management

Neurosurgical Unit

Summary points to remember:

- The collar is used to support neck bones and ligaments and prevent further injury to the neck
- The collar should remain on at all times – unless instructed otherwise by your doctor
- You may require some assistance to change the collar



What is a Miami J Collar?

The Miami J collar is a two piece collar. It has a front piece and a back piece, with interchangeable soft blue pads. When the collar is in place, it is held together by Velcro straps that are fixed from the back piece of the collar to the front. The collar is used to support neck bones and ligaments and reduce any movement that may cause further damage to the cervical spine/neck injury sustained.

When do I wear the collar?

The collar must be worn at all times, including in the shower, at rest and when sleeping, unless otherwise specified by the doctor/medical team.

Daily Activities

Driving:

It is strongly advised that you **do not drive** whilst wearing a Miami J collar as it is extremely dangerous. The Miami J collar, combined with neck stiffness and injury, restricts movement of the neck and reduces scope of vision, making driving unsafe. You are not covered by any insurance company to drive whilst wearing a neck collar.

Sleeping:

It is recommended that you sleep on one supportive pillow. It is essential to observe the back of the head and chin for changes in skin or development of sores whilst wearing the collar. If you have any concerns regarding this contact your GP, district nurse or practice nurse.

Walking:

You may have difficulty looking down when walking. This may be of concern when there are stairs or uneven surfaces such as concrete. It is best to hold onto a handrail when walking down stairs.

Eating and drinking:

You may find that eating and drinking can be difficult at first due to the chin support from the collar. You will have difficulty looking down at a plate of food or tilting a cup/glass to drink. Try to have a plate where you can see it and avoid any spills by using a straw to drink.

Showering

- You will be sent home with one collar and an extra set of liners. Wear the collar in the shower and change the liners once you have finished.
- You can change the collar liners on your own; however, a second person to assist you is ideal.
- It is best to change the collar liners in front of a mirror, either standing up or sitting with your feet flat on the floor.
- Ensure that you keep your head very still when you remove the wet collar after your shower. Dry your neck and re-apply the dry collar as instructed below.
- It is advised that you shave facial hair daily after showering, while the collar is off. Be sure to keep your head very still.

Changing the collar liners with assistance

- 1) Sit in a chair with back support, facing a mirror if possible. Undo the Velcro straps by pulling them backwards, ensuring that you remain in a sitting position at all times. Do not move your neck.

- 2) The person assisting you should stand behind you and keep the back piece of the collar to the back of your neck. This allows the front part of the collar to be removed to dry your chin and neck thoroughly if it is following a shower. Change the liners to the front of the collar, checking the skin of the chin and neck. Once the front liners are changed, place the front of the collar on your chest and slide up the neck to the ears, until the collar sits snugly, centered under the chin.
- 3) Whilst you are supporting the front of the collar, the person assisting you can remove the back piece. Dry your neck thoroughly and replace the liners. You must ensure that you remain still during this time. The person assisting you can then replace the back of the collar and place the Velcro straps in position so that they are symmetrical and your chin is fitted snugly into the collar.
- 4) The back of the collar and the Velcro straps should overlap the front of the collar so that the padded liners are against your skin.
- 5) Do not apply creams or powders to the skin which is supported by the Miami J collar.

Changing the collar without assistance

If you are changing the collar without assistance, follow steps 1 – 4 as above. However, you will need to ensure that you are holding the back piece whilst fitting the front piece and that they are centred and secured with the Velcro straps as instructed.

A member of the nursing team can instruct you further if you are experiencing any difficulties.

Correct fitting

To ensure the collar is fitting correctly, check that:

- your chin is resting in the chin support
- the collar is sitting below your ears
- the collar is centered
- the Velcro straps are secured firmly and symmetrically
- the back piece is overlapping the front piece
- the collar is resting firmly and securely on your chest



Caring for the collar liners

After completing the collar liner change, wash and dry the removed collar liners so they are ready for use after your next shower.

- The collar liners can be washed with warm soapy water and rinsed thoroughly
- Roll liners in a towel to wring out excess water
- Lay liners flat to air dry
- Do not tumble dry as the liners can shrink

What to look for!

- Check daily for redness, breaks in the skin or sore patches on the chin, collarbone and sternum (chest bone). Get someone to check the back of your head if you can. Such irritations can occur if the collar is not fitted correctly.
- Rashes can occur and are often caused by heat building up in the liner of the collar. Therefore you may require more regular collar liner changes, or use a milder detergent to wash the liners.
- **Caution:** Talcum powder or substitute powders and creams should not be used on the skin underneath a collar. This can cause the development of skin breakage and sores.

Please do not hesitate to discuss your care needs further whilst on the ward with any member of the medical, nursing, physiotherapy or occupational therapy teams.

When to contact the doctor

You should contact your GP, district nurse or practice nurse if you think the collar is not fitting correctly or if you have any breaking skin on your chin, collarbone, sternum (chest bone) or back of your head.

Contact numbers:

NHS 24 number	111
Ninewells Hospital	01382 660111
Ward 23B	01382 425712, extension 35473

Developed by Advanced Nurse Practitioner in Neurosurgery and reviewed by
Neurosurgeon

Reviewed: 06/2024 Review: 06/2026 LN1046

This leaflet can be made available in other languages and formats on request
Speak to the nurse/health professional looking after you to arrange this