



Trans men and trans masculine young people information for safer chest binding

We have produced this fact sheet in response to information requests about binding and questions about safety; here is the best information we can find and is informed also by personal experience.

What is Binding? Binding, short for breast binding. It is usually done by trans men and trans masculine young people and to a lesser extent some lesbians; to make their breasts/chest look less noticeable and more masculine in appearance. For some trans young people this is a way of managing their experience of gender dysphoria associated with their breasts/chest area.

Research by the Binding Health Project found that even with specifically designed binding products, it's still possible to bind unsafely. It is extremely important to **NOT buy a binder that's too small for you**. By wearing a binder that is too small for you, it puts you at risk of the same problems as people who bind with ACE bandages or duct tape. **NEVER bind with bandages or duct tape**.

Other misinformation and inappropriate advice on the internet and in some trans people's trans advice Vlogs is to wear tape and/or another binder on top of your binder. This will cause restricted breathing and physical injury. **Do NOT double bind!**

Young people, remember that you are still growing! Your body needs a rest, **do NOT sleep in your binder, EVER!** Also, do not wear your binder whilst engaging in vigorous exercise, as binders are not designed for this purpose and can make moving and breathing more difficult.

All reputable companies that supply binders recommend that you only wear your binder for a **maximum of 8 hours a day!** This is because binding for too long every day over an extended period can break down tissue and cause breathing problems, back pain, and skin irritation.

Binding should never hurt. Your first binder may be uncomfortable at first as you get used to wearing one, but pain is always an indicator that something is wrong. If you are in pain, take your binder off as soon as you can. It may be that a different style of binder will suit your body better, that you are wearing one that is the wrong size for you, or that you simply need to take a break from binding.

Signs that your binder may be too small and will therefore cause physical damage:

Marks on your skin, ie bruising, rubbing or pinching, tingling or numbness in fingers / hands, pain, soreness, or extreme discomfort, extreme difficulty in putting on / taking off your binder, shortness of breath, or trouble taking a full breath with ease.

Trying to manage your gender dysphoria can not come at the expense of your health!

Personal experience –

Take half a dozen deep breaths when you take your binder off at the end of the day. You automatically take slightly shallower breaths when binding (not in an unsafe way) and so it's important to give your lungs a chance to expand fully, especially during winter months to help prevent coughs and colds turning into chest infections and/or pneumonia.

Binders aren't designed to wick sweat and so if skin irritation is a problem, perhaps think about wearing a thin cotton tshirt or vest under your binder. Also, remember to wash your binder regularly for hygiene reasons. Hand wash or in a washing machine at low temperature and spin speed and air dry is usually best. If you wear your binder every day, washing it at least once a week is advisable.

It not only helps prevent exacerbation of any acne or skin irritation in chest/back area, but also extends the life of the binder.

Sometimes you will need to bind less than 8 hours a day. Such as in summer months when it is really hot, you may need to take more breaks from binding or bind for shorter periods to prevent overheating. Don't bind when you are ill, especially if it is something that affects your ability to breathe. Your body is working hard enough as it is to fight off the illness, without the extra stress and strain binding has on your ability to breathe. Listen to your body, if you're not sure, be safe and take a break. Better to take one day off from binding even when perhaps you would have been fine to bind than to push through and have to take weeks off whilst your broken ribs heal.

8 hours is recommended but this isn't a one size fits all rule. When you get your first binder, you often need to ease your way into wearing it and so maybe start out with only binding for a few hours a day and work your way up to 8. Also, 8 hours can sometimes be unpractical (that's the length of your average school/college/work day but doesn't account for any travelling time or doing anything after school) so it is often known that you are safe to bind for up to 12 hours as long as you are not doing this every single day and take breaks in compensation. For example binding for 10 hours a day on the weekdays and then not binding at all for at least one day at the weekend, or binding for 8 hours at school, coming home and taking an hour or two break before putting it back on for a couple of hours to go out (for youth group for example).



Image produced with the kind permission of Nick Sharksmith.

Disclaimer: Y Services does not endorse the information provided. Y Services can not take any responsibility for the effects of wearing a binder. Information has been compiled from the following sources: <https://transguys.com> binding 101, <http://point5cc.com/binding-101-tips-to-bind-your-chest-safely/>, <https://broadly.vice.com> article titled inside the landmark. FAQ on GC2B website which is a popular binder range. So that young people, their parents and carers can support them to make informed decisions. Young people who wish to compress the appearance of their chest are going to do it with or without adult approval using whatever resources they have. Young people will bind despite good advice and take risks to achieve being able to better cope with dysphoria.

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