



# Pavlik Harness

## What is a Pavlik harness?

A soft brace that helps hold your baby's legs in a position that allows their hip joint to be aligned and stable so that it develops correctly. The Pavlik harness is a "dynamic brace," meaning that it is not rigid and allows your baby to move their legs.

The harness is one of the safest, most effective treatment options for developmental dysplasia of the hip (DDH) in infants from birth to six months of age. It is typically worn 24 hours a day, unless otherwise directed by your doctor.

## Is treatment painful?

If the harness is properly fitted and cared for, it is a pain-free treatment for infants with DDH. It can take a couple of days for your baby to become accustomed to wearing the harness, so some fussing and crying the first few days is normal.

Within 24 to 72 hours of wearing the harness full-time, your baby will become more comfortable with it, as the treatment itself is gentle.

## How long will my child need to wear the harness?

The amount of treatment time varies based upon the severity of your child's DDH. In the majority of cases, the harness is worn 24 hours a day for 8–12 weeks.

Depending on the severity of your baby's dysplasia, for the first few weeks they will usually need to see the doctor every week in order to adjust the harness and receive an ultrasound of their hips. After 3–4 weeks, you will only need to see the doctor for a harness adjustment every 2–4 weeks.

After 8 weeks of treatment, your child will have an ultrasound without wearing the harness. From that assessment, your doctor will determine whether or not your child can stop wearing the harness full-time.

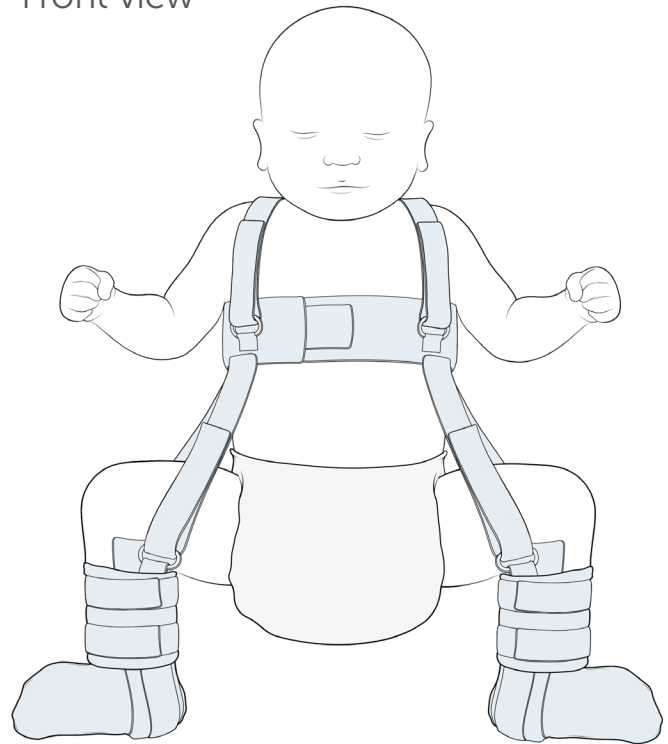
## How do I care for the harness?

The Pavlik harness should be kept on your child at all times and should only be removed at the instruction of your doctor.

The harness is worn underneath your baby's clothes. This generally works best with one piece sleep sacks and larger-sized clothing, which help prevent the clothing from restricting your child's ability to move their legs. Clothing that brings the knees in together — such as pants or anything with a waist band — should not be worn.

## Pavlik Harness

### Front view



## How do I care for my child while they are wearing the harness?

### Bathing

You should not bathe your child in a bath tub while they are wearing the harness full-time. Sponge baths are the best bathing alternative during this time. Once their hip is stable, or your physician permits, you will be able to bathe your child.

### Skin care

Do not put lotion on your baby's skin where it comes in contact with the harness, as it could moisten the skin and cause skin breakdown. Also avoid using powders around the harness, as the powder can cause irritation as well.

Pay extra attention to your baby's groin area and behind their knees. Because the harness keeps their legs in a flexed position, these areas often stay moist and can be more easily irritated. A good way to care for this is to wipe behind the knees and in the groin with a dry cloth/paper towel every time you change your child's diaper.

Several times a day, you should check your baby's skin around the edges of the harness to ensure there is no redness or irritation.

[continued >>>](#)

## Positioning

While your child is wearing the Pavlik harness, it is important that they spend as much time as possible on a flat surface, laying on their back. This helps the knees to fall outward and to the side – allowing the hip socket(s) to properly develop.

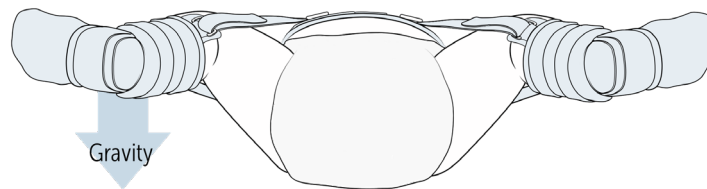
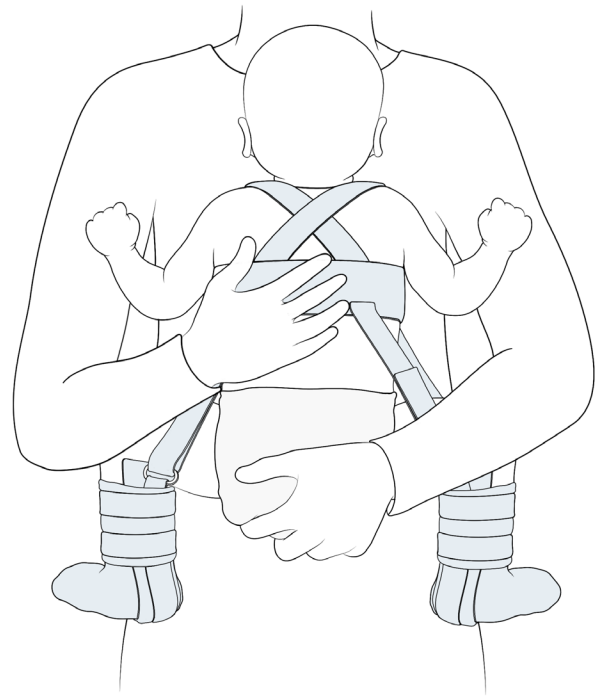
If your baby prefers to be swaddled, you can swaddle the arms and upper body, but the legs should not be swaddled.

Limit the time your child spends in a bouncy seat or swing to two hours or less per day. The positioning of these activities brings your child's legs inward so that their knees cannot fall outward in the brace.

## What are areas of concern that warrant a call to the doctor?

- If your child cries continuously and you are unable to comfort them
- If there are any red and irritated areas of the skin that do not go away with application of moleskin to the harness
- If you notice that your child is not kicking one of his/her legs
- If you have any other questions or concerns

## Pavlik Harness Back and bottom views



## Notes

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Produced by the Child and Young Adult Hip Preservation Program in the Orthopedic Center at Boston Children's Hospital.

For more information or to request an appointment visit [bostonchildrens.org/hip](https://www.bostonchildrens.org/hip).

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Child and Young Adult  
Hip Preservation Program