





Head and Neck Positioning Recommendations

Neck weakness associated with ALS can cause significant discomfort and impact your ability to perform daily tasks. The following strategies may help to improve your comfort throughout the day:

1. **Change Your Position:** Find time throughout the day to use gravity to help rest your head and neck by lying down or by tilting/reclining back when seated. This is possible with a recliner chair, your seat in the car, a wedge pillow, a tilt wheelchair, a tilt commode, or a hospital bed.
2. **Modify Your Environment:** Try to limit the time you spend looking down at objects (such as your tablet, phone, book, computer, or television) by positioning them at eye height. A height-adjustable over-bed table may assist with easy positioning of these devices.
3. **Support Your Neck:** Many people with neck weakness find a neck brace (or “cervical collar”) helpful for positioning their head and neck when sitting upright or walking. If a neck brace is too restrictive, consider using a u-shaped travel pillow or rolled up towels to give you some extra support.

Firm Foam Collar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides light support to the neck in all directions • Minimal impact on neck mobility • Limited airflow at neck • Measurements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Length = neck circumference ○ Width = chin to sternal notch
Headmaster Collar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides medium support to the neck from underneath the chin • Minimal impact on neck mobility • Open neck allows airflow at neck, and places no pressure on throat • Flexible wire structure can be adjusted for individual comfort • Measurement (under the jaw from the centre of the chin to the angle of the mandible)
Philadelphia Collar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides rigid support to the neck in all directions • Severely limits neck mobility • Opening at neck allows some air-flow and accommodates a tracheostomy • Measurements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Width = neck circumference ○ Height = chin to sternal notch
Aspen Vista Collar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides more rigid support to support your head and neck. • Foam padding wicks moisture and a hole at the neck allows for air-flow. • Measurement needs to be taken by a therapist.

Please be aware that for best results, you should be assessed for a cervical collar by an occupational therapist or physiotherapist. If there is another model of cervical collar you would like to purchase, please contact your ALS Clinic OT to ensure it will meet your needs.

Wear Instructions for Cervical Collars

- Wear your cervical collar when you are in an upright position to provide additional support, for example, when you are walking, sitting upright, during transfers, in vehicles, or other times you want external support for your neck.
 - Do not wear your cervical collar when eating, as it may impact your swallowing. You may wear it to drink one sip at a time out of a cup or using a straw.
 - Wear the collar for 1h at a time and take regular breaks from your collar throughout the day. Collars often cause discomfort at the jaw, chest, or shoulders after about an hour of wear.
 - Check your skin for redness and irritation lasting for more than 10 minutes after each use.
 - If able, complete gentle neck and shoulder stretches (alone or with assistance) after each use.
 - Follow the care and cleaning instructions that come with your collar.
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Where to Purchase a Cervical Collar

Firm foam cervical collars can be found at many stores, including home health/medical supply stores, pharmacies, and online stores (such as Amazon).

Aspen Vista, Philadelphia, and Headmaster collars are specialized medical equipment and can be purchased from a medical supply store. Call ahead to ensure the collar is in stock.

Some insurance companies will provide partial coverage for these devices. Let the ALS Clinic know if you require a prescription or letter of support for this device.

If you require home safety or mobility equipment (such as a power lift recliner, a wheelchair with headrest, a shower commode with headrest, or a hospital bed) to provide support for your head and neck, please contact your OT so that the proper sizes can be requested through ALS Canada.
