

Information for Clinical Choice

A review of Cervical Collars 2026

Support Document

Introduction

Information for Clinical Choice (ICC) has been developed to assist Clinicians in the decision-making process when assessing the suitability of a product by providing a clear illustration and description of the features of a range of similar products supplied through NHS Supply Chain. The criteria provided, in the form of a Support Document, is the result of a product review, conducted by Clinical Specialists, with support from clinical stakeholders from across the NHS.

The aim, alongside delivering savings back into NHS frontline services, is to ensure that clinical choice remains at the forefront of any product switching decision.

Orthotic Services Immobilisation Services and Associated Products: Cervical Collars

A review of all the cervical collars currently purchased by the NHS has been undertaken to identify common requirements, usage and trends with the aim of capturing opportunities for optimisation and savings.

Cervical Collars reviewed here have been grouped into five main product categories:

1. Semi-Rigid Collar - Extrication Collar
2. Semi-Rigid Collar - (Medium/Long Term Use)
3. Soft Collar
4. Torticollis Collars
5. Head Drop Collars.

The functionality of collars in groups 1 and 2 are to provide spinal stabilisation, significantly reduce movement thus preventing the risk of further damage, aid recovery and provide patient comfort.

The Soft Collars functionality is to provide cervical support in natural alignment displacing some of the weight from the head, providing relief to the neck muscles and ligaments whilst providing additional patient comfort from reduced movement.

Torticollis and Head Drop Collars are designed to support head tilt/drop patients, to provide comfort, help communication and swallowing.

All cervical collars in this review are:

- Latex-Free
- Radiolucent
- MRI and CT compatible.

Semi-Rigid - Extrication Collars

Extrication collars are primarily used in the pre-hospital environment by Ambulance Trusts and occasionally in A&E Departments. Often used in conjunction with immobilisation equipment such as spinal boards / scoop stretchers and/or headblocks/pads to prevent further damage to the c-spine during the initial stages of transport and treatment. They come in two types.

Fixed Size

A range of 6 products which cover the full spectrum of patient neck sizes. These are the original cervical collars prior to adjustable collars being developed. Colour coded to identify different sizes.

Accounts for <4% NHS Sales in this group*.

Storage optimisation and savings are available to trusts if they switch to the adjustable collar. E.g., To maintain stock for 2 patients would require 12 collars, compared to 4 adjustable collars.

Adjustable Collar

These are provided in 2 sizes (Adult / Paediatric). They have a sliding mechanism which enable the product to be adjusted to meet the specific patient size with a locking feature to keep in place.

Accounts for 96% of NHS Sales*

(*Analysis of NHS Supply Chain, SCS and Supplier provided information)

Semi Rigid (with or without replacement pads)

The Semi-Rigid Collars in this range are designed for medium / longer term wear. Indicated for use post trauma, post- operatively, once fully assessed.

Fixed

Similar to the Extrication Collars they come in a variety of sizes (generally up to 6 Adult and 4 Paediatric versions). As they are used for a wider spectrum of patients and for varying lengths of time, some products offer the option of purchasing the front or back pieces separately. Suppliers may provide 2 product versions of a range (with or without replacement pads). This enables the pads which are in contact with the skin to be washed or replaced when worn saving on the cost of replacing the whole collar and providing a better patient and sustainability offering.

Please review your trust usage and requirements as purchasing collar and replacement pads as a unit are better value than purchasing replacement pads separately should they be required.

Adjustable

An adjustable collar option is available for several product ranges, the usage of these compares to the volumes of the fixed collars but to date only come in an adult size.

These products are used for the medium to long term user, ensuring they fit and don't accidentally adjust during daily use / cleaning and the changing of pads may account for the continued preference of fixed sizes in some scenarios.

Variations

Some models are adapted to provide a larger occipital pad area, larger tracheal opening or thoracic support. In addition some models are designed to connect with their thoracic brace components as part of a modular Spinal Support Systems to provide a more rigid cervical thoracic orthosis (CTO).

Soft Collars

Soft collars are made from a variety of materials from foam to beads. Soft collars can be used for patients with moderate pain for conditions such as whiplash injuries, currently there is a lack of evidence to either support or refute the usage of these products¹ and the use will depend on patient demographics and clinical preference. The range currently accounts for 2% of NHS sales*. There is a lack of standardisation in how these collars are measured. Some brands refer to sizes and others reference height and/or circumference with no commonality as to what defines e.g. medium, or large.

All soft collars have been analysed and grouped according to neck circumference; the secondary descriptions are being updated to include this information.

Soft Collars		
Size	Ref	CM
XXS	1	<35
XS	2	35-39
S	3	40-44
M	4	45-49
L	5	50-54
XL	6	55-59
XXL	7	60-64

Torticollis Collars

A torticollis collar is designed to support the neck and gently correct abnormal head posture caused by conditions such as congenital muscular torticollis or acquired muscle imbalance. It works by guiding the head and neck into a more neutral alignment, helping reduce muscle tightness and asymmetry while preventing further postural deviation. The collar provides soft, comfortable stabilization that encourages proper positioning during daily activities, supporting rehabilitation alongside stretching or physiotherapy.

Head Drop Collar

A head drop collar (often used for cervical extensor weakness) provides firm external support to keep the head upright when patients cannot maintain this position independently due to neuromuscular disorders, injury, or degenerative conditions. It stabilises the chin and occiput to prevent the head from falling forward, improving vision, breathing, swallowing, and overall functional mobility. By reducing the effort required to hold the head up, the collar helps alleviate muscle fatigue and enhances comfort and safety during everyday movement.

References

1. Christensen SWM, Rasmussen MB, Jespersen CL, Sterling M, Skou ST. (2021) "Soft-collar use in rehabilitation of whiplash-associated disorders - A systematic review and meta-analysis", *Musculoskeletal Science and Practice*, Volume 55:102426, doi.org/10.1016/j.msksp.2021.102426. (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2468781221001107>)