

Binder Best Practice

***A guide to binding
safely***



Acknowledgements:

Written by: Queensland Council for LGBTI Health in conjunction with the Transgender and Gender Diverse Community Health Advisory Group and community consultation with Transgender, Gender Diverse and Non-Binary communities across Queensland.

Queensland Council for LGBTI Health acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Land on which we live, play and work upon. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future, we extend our respect to all Elders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia and acknowledge that this always was and always will be Aboriginal land.



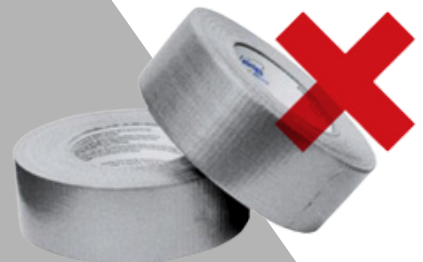
What is Binding?

Chest binding is the practice of wearing a compression top (like a singlet or tank top) made of Nylon spandex type material to flatten your chest, the benefits to this is it often alleviates dysphoria by giving the wearer a flatter chest.

This practice is quite common for trans masculine, gender diverse and non-binary folk.

Binding is not recommended for everyone, those who have had chest or back injuries or pain should talk to their GP before choosing to bind or buying a binder.

The purpose of this resource is to outline how to bind safely, how to choose the best binder for you and also give tips and explain some of the problems that can occur from binding incorrectly and the health impacts they can have.



How to bind safely

The first step in learning how to bind safely is finding out about what is not safe to do. Don't use bandages or any kind of tape — they aren't meant for binding, even the ones that say they can be used for binding can do a lot of damage.

This is because they don't always move with your body, and can cause physical harm, possibly even permanent damage. In a correctly fitting binder, you should be able to breathe without trouble. Your binder should not cause excessive discomfort or dig into your skin. If you experience any of this, you likely have the wrong size!

Binding incorrectly or having the wrong size can seriously restrict breathing, cause fluid build-up in your lungs and other serious injuries, such as broken ribs, bruising as well as skin tears and cuts.

Don't bind incorrectly it is not safe!

More information on binding safely can also be found in the Minus 18 resource how to bind safely and the list of references at the end of this guide.

Even with the right binder product it's still possible to bind unsafely. Despite what you may have been told, don't buy a binder that is too small for you.

Wearing an ill-fitting binder puts you at risk of the same problems as those who bind with Ace bandages or tape. Another piece of incorrect advice floating around out there is to wear tape and/or another binder on top of your binder. This too can cause restricted breathing and physical injury, such as breakdown of tissue around the chest, broken ribs, bruising and cause pain.

Lastly, give your body a break: don't bind 24/7. In fact, don't bind for more than 8 hours at a time. Binding evidence from Minus 18 and other sources listed below say that binding should be limited to 8-10 hours per day.

Suppressing dysphoria should not come at the expense of your health, this can lead to permanent damage and if you decide that you would like surgical invention, damage done to your chest as a result of binding can impact on the outcome.

Use the time that you are not binding to wash and air dry your binder, which will help make it last longer and make them a lot better for your body, as they will be clean.

If you are in a warmer climate you may also be prone to rashes and overheating so air your body as much as you can with your binder off to allow your body a break from binding.

Binding Best Practice

- Binding for long hours every day over time breaks down tissue and can cause breathing problems, shoulder and back pain.
- Always take your binder off before you sleep. Give your body rest while you rest.
- Also, take it off before exercising. If it hurts, stop.
- Try a larger binder or try different ways to hide your chest without binding.
- **Pain is always an indicator that something is wrong**



Credit: Jenny Chang / BuzzFeed

How to choose a binder

All evidence from the references used during this guide point to correct sizing being crucial to minimize potential damage to your health and wellbeing. Please use the measurement instructions on your chosen binder manufacturer's website as not all binders have the same styles of binding and sizing may also be different. Remember, correct sizing is critical and will generally lead to better and safer binding!



Essentially, there are two main styles of binders short ones (often called crop or tank) and long ones (full length). The short ones end at about the bottom of your rib cage.

The down side of these is that if you carry some extra weight, these short binders tend to roll up and act more like a bra. The long ones can be pulled down past your waist by several inches (depending on your height), however it is inevitable that it will still roll up.

Choosing between a short and long binder has more to do with your body type, specifically your abdomen, and not your chest size. Which binder you choose is ultimately up to you, as long as the sizing is correct. Again, it is important to note that all evidence points to correct sizing being crucial for health and wellbeing.



How to put on a binder

It might seem a bit strange that we're telling you how to put a binder on, I mean how hard can it be, right?!

But (trust me) you're probably going to need some help figuring out how to put on your new binder, particularly if you purchased one of the longer styles.

The following is considered best practice according to sources mentioned during and at the end of this guide.

1. Step into your binder and pull the bottom of it up, ideally to your belt or waist line.
2. Use the sleeves as handles to pull the top of the binder up to your shoulders.
3. Put your arms through the sleeve holes and adjust your chest to your needs.

Don't be disappointed if you look in the mirror and it looks like you have one big lump in the middle of your chest. You just need to adjust your chest. Reach in from the neck hole and push your chest down and out. You're basically pushing your nipple toward your armpit to achieve the flattest looking chest possible. Your chest will look bigger than it really is when you look down at it. Check in the mirror for a more accurate side view.



Whilst this works for most people, you may need to experiment a bit to see what works for you as chest and body shape can be a factor in what works best. Standing in front of a mirror is also good for this.

Binding Tips

Very important: Please adhere to best practice guidelines used within this guide and also at the references at the end of this guide.

Binders aren't the most comfortable things in the world however they shouldn't make you feel like you can't breathe or are going to pass out.

To make binding more comfortable, and to reduce the possibility of the binder moving around a bit, some people wear a light shirt or singlet underneath but this isn't ideal for everyone.

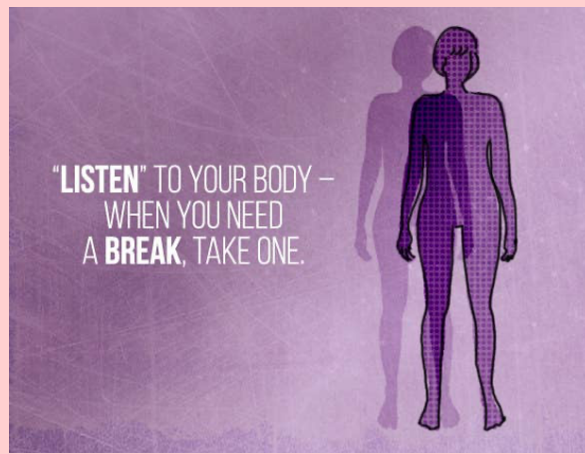
Depending on the size of your chest, you may need to layer clothing on top of the binder to get optimal chest flattening. Be mindful of layering in warmer climates as you can easily overheat which may lead to other health issues such as dehydration.

It is not recommended that you swim in your binder, you can purchase swimming binders from some companies. Depending on the size of your chest a rashie may be enough.



Credit: Jenny Chang / BuzzFeed

If you've already started testosterone, you're definitely going to sweat. Sweat can irritate your skin causing rashes and sores. Wearing a thin cotton singlet that breathes well underneath your binder may help prevent this. If you've already experienced skin irritation of some sort, take care of it the same way you would an open wound. Washing the irritated area with anti-bacterial soap will keep it clean and help it heal faster.



Credit: Jenny Chang / BuzzFeed

Binding can be very freeing for trans masculine, gender diverse and non-binary folk.

There is a number of quality of binding products available for body types of all shapes and sizes. Regardless of what you use for binding, please remember to put your health first.

Now that you're armed with all the information you need to find the right binder for you, go forth and feel more comfortable in your skin!

This guide was developed using information from:

Minus 18 – Healthier & safer ways to bind your chest

<https://www.minus18.org.au/index.php/resources/sexuality-info/item/441-how-to-bind-your-chest>

GenderConfirmation – Breast Binding

<https://www.genderconfirmation.com/breast-binding/>

Pride In Practice: Chest binding – A physicians guide

<https://www.prideinpractice.org/articles/chest-binding-physician-guide/>

Point 5cc: Binding 101

<http://point5cc.com/binding-101-tips-to-bind-your-chest-safely/>