



GENDER CLINIC

About chest binding

What is chest binding?

Chest binding is wrapping something around your chest to flatten your breasts. You can do this by wearing a tight-fitting piece of clothing called a "binder," or in other ways. Chest binding can help people of any gender feel more comfortable with the way their chest looks and feels.

What to know first

Binding can be helpful, but doing it safely is very important. You might consider using stretchy bandages or duct tape. But these items are not made for binding, and they can be dangerous. Using them can keep you from breathing normally, make fluid build up in your lungs and even cause serious injuries, such as broken ribs.

Always talk to your doctor or other health care provider before you bind your chest.

Find a binder that fits well

You need a binder that fits you well. Avoid choosing one that is smaller than you need, even if you want your chest to look as flat as possible. Wearing a binder that is too small puts you at risk for the same problems as using stretchy bandages or tape. Also, avoid wearing tape or another binder on top of your binder.

Finding your size

The following information is adapted from www.gc2b.co. You need to measure your chest and your shoulders.

You might want to ask someone else to help. This can make measuring easier and more accurate.

Measuring your chest

1. Wrap a tape measure around the fullest part of your chest. This is the part that comes out the farthest from your body. Do this while you are dressed.
2. Write down the measurement. You might want to measure more than once to check it.
3. Wrap the tape measure around your chest, right under your breasts. This is where the crease is.
4. Write down the measurement.
5. Add the measurements together and divide by 2. This is your chest size.

Binders are sold in small, medium, large, extra-large, and more. You may see numbers next to each size. Find the number for your chest size.

Measuring your shoulders

1. Put the end of the tape at the outside edge of one of your shoulders. Measure across your body to the outside edge of your other shoulder. Make sure you are standing up straight. Avoid tensing up, hunching your shoulders or wrapping the measuring tape around your shoulders.
2. Write down the number you get. This is your shoulder size.

The size chart will have a shoulder measurement. So, when you find your chest size, check that your shoulder measurement is there, too. The information below has more tips on finding your size.

If this happens ...	Do this
Your shoulder measurement is 1.5 inches bigger than the shoulder measurements listed for your chest size.	Buy a larger size, usually the next size up.
Your shoulder measurement is smaller than the shoulder measurements for your chest size.	Buy the size that matches your chest measurement.
You have a larger chest or broad shoulders.	Consider a tank binder. This might be the most comfortable style for you.
You buy a binder that is smaller than your measurements.	Return it for one that fits. The effect on your chest is probably not enough to notice, and the wrong size puts pressure on your back and ribs.

How often to bind

How often can you bind your chest, and when? Here are some important tips to stay healthy and comfortable.

- Only bind for 8 to 10 hours at a time. Even the best binders can cause bruises or sores if you wear them too much.
- Take your binder off at night, just like other daytime clothing.
- Take breaks during the week. Avoid binding 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Use the time you are taking a break to wash your binder. Then hang it up to dry. This will make it last longer.

Choosing a binder

Binders usually come in two styles, short and long.

- Short binders end at your waist. This can be cooler in the summer. But they tend to roll up. If you want the binder to control your waistline too, a short binder is less effective.
- Long binders go to several inches below your waist. They can still roll up, but wearing a belt can help.

There are also binders made to wear when you work out. Choose this type of binder for exercise.

You can get binders with zippers, Velcro or clasps. These can be easier to put on and take off than binders that go over your head.

Where to shop

Here are some binder brands. OHSU does not support any specific brand, and the right binder is different for everyone.

Underworks is a popular brand. They are trans-friendly and have a reputation for good customer service. They are known for long binders without tummy compression. Their binders come in sizes up to 3X. Check the men's section for everyday binders and the women's section for the Extreme Magicotton Sports and Binding Bra. This is an exercise binder.

Gc2b Transitional Apparel is one of the more affordable brands. Prices are around \$35. Binders come in a variety of skin colors.

MyDouble Design makes a binder that zips up the front. They also have other styles. If you need a plus-sized binder, you may have trouble finding the right size here.

ShapeShifters can make a binder for your measurements. They will even widen or narrow the straps, raise or lower the armholes or set the straps closer or farther from your neck.

In the Portland area

Shebop is a sex-positive adult retailer in Portland for ages 18 and older. It offers appointments outside regular business so younger people can buy gender-affirming products. Make an appointment by emailing info@sheboptheshop.com. Those younger than 18 must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, and the parent/guardian must sign a consent form.

The Pencil Test is a lingerie and bra shop located at 2407 NE Alberta St. They are trans friendly and will fit you for a binder. You may want to call ahead (971-266-8611) to let them know you are coming.

How to put on your binder

1. Turn your binder inside out and upside down. Step into it.
2. Pull the bottom up. Long binders should be at your belt line and short binders should be at your natural waist.
3. The binder should still be inside out and upside down. Use the straps as handles to pull the top of the binder (the end closer to your feet) up to your shoulders.
4. Put your arms through the straps and adjust your chest. You may need to pull the bottom of the binder out from underneath itself if you don't want it folded under. Or you may leave it folded under to help stop the binder from rolling up.

If you have a large chest

You might want to push your breasts towards your armpits instead of letting the binder push them flat. Some people recommend pushing "down and out," and others prefer "up and out." Try different things to see what looks and feels best to you.

You might need to adjust things through the day. Look at yourself sideways in a mirror. This is how everyone else sees you. Avoid looking straight down. Your chest always looks bigger from this angle.

You need more breaks from wearing the binder if your chest is large. Bind for just 6 or 8 hours at a time. Do not bind overnight or while exercising. You can get creative with your breaks, such as taking the binder off somewhere private at lunch time or not wearing it on weekends. Read "Alternatives to Binding" for more tips on feeling good about your body without a binder. There are many ways to look good and feel comfortable while taking care of your body.

If you have a small chest

You may be able to use a sports bra instead of a binder. There are many compression bras available, and they can be easier to find and cheaper to buy than binders. For a small chest, they can be just as effective.

Skin health

Binding can make some skin conditions worse, such as acne or eczema. Check your skin when you remove your binder. You should not see redness or bleeding around the edges of the binder. If you do, it is too tight.

You can wear a thin cotton undershirt or tank top under the binder if it irritates your skin. You can also use unscented baby powder to absorb sweat and make you sweat less. This can be especially helpful in the summer.

Taking care of your binder

Wash your binder regularly. This helps keep it from causing itching or rashes, especially in warm weather. Here are some tips for taking care of your binder.

- Wash your binder in cold water on a delicate cycle. Or wash it by hand in the sink with laundry detergent and warm water. Avoid hot water and putting your binder in the dryer.
- Hang the binder up to dry.
- Keep your binder on a hanger when you are not wearing it. This helps it keep its shape.
- Have more than one binder, if possible. This allows you to wash and dry them regularly.

Alternatives to binding

Sometimes binding is just not an option. This can be discouraging. But there are many ways to feel better about your body without binding. Wearing a tight-fitting undershirt or tank top and using some smart layering can work surprisingly well. Try a looser T-shirt or a fitted button-up shirt to slim your chest.

You might think baggy clothes are the answer. But they are actually less effective at hiding curves. If your shirt is too baggy, it can hang off your chest. This creates more shadows and curves.

Dark colors like black, brown and navy can make a chest look flatter and smoother. You can also try wearing subtle patterns, vertical stripes, plaid or a bold graphic print. Solid colors can sometimes bring more attention to your chest.

If you have questions

If you need to do this ...	Please contact
Make an appointment, ask a medical question, get a referral to another clinic or specialist or get a medication refill	Call 503-418-5710 or contact us through MyChart
Contact our psychologist	Call 503-494-6337 or contact them through MyChart
Get a referral to a community organization or support group	Call 503-494-7970 or contact us through MyChart
Contact our social worker	Call 503-484-7970 or contact them through MyChart
Learn more about the OHSU Transgender Health Program	Go to www.ohsu.edu/transgender-health