

SAFER BINDING METHODS

Chest compression vests: These compression garments are typically made of spandex and lycra. Some are advertised as gynecomastia vests while others were specially designed to suit the needs of trans* people. These binders come in a variety of colors, styles, and closure types to suit a wide range of bodies. Garments designed specifically for binding also tend to be constructed of breathable fabrics and with comfort in mind.

Sports bras: This method involves wearing a tight sports bra to compress one's chest. This method can be successful if you are a smaller size; however, some people find it necessary to layer more than one sports bra to achieve their desired look.

Abdominal trimmers or back braces: These are sometimes made of neoprene and work well for binding; however, the material is not breathable so you may have some skin irritation.

Layering of shirts: This method can be used alone or combined with any of the above. If you do not wish to wear a binder, layering can be an option for you. Button-down shirts (woven, not knitted) are favorable because they hang rather than cling. Patterns also distract the eye and can minimize the appearance of your chest.

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A GUIDE ON HOW TO
SAFELY CHESTBIND

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BOUND FOR GLORY



WHAT IS CHEST BINDING?

The term "binding" refers to the process of flattening one's breast tissue in order to create a male-appearing chest. The type of materials and methods used for successful binding will vary depending on the size of a guy's chest and the overall build of his body.

Some guys don't bind at all. Some slump or hunch over to hide their chests (which can be very effective, but can also cause posture problems over time). Some use different methods of layering clothing to help hide their chests. Some bind only on certain occasions; some bind all the time. For those who do choose to bind, a number of binding methods and tips are described in this pamphlet.

Keep in mind that other trans men are great resources when it comes to sharing binding tips and tricks. They may also be able to guide you to used binder exchange programs—many guys who have chest surgery pass on their old binders to others at minimal or no cost.

WHAT ARE THE SAFETY CONCERNS?

When you bind, you are putting your body under a considerable amount of stress. This is why safety is the number one issue when binding. The dangers can range from mild to severe depending on how intensely one is bound.

Some issues that may arise include:

- **Pain and/or general discomfort.** Some methods of binding can result in sweating, discomfort, and/or pain. Rib tenderness is also possible.
- **Breathing difficulty.** Since binding involves compression on your chest and restriction of movement over a period of time, you may find yourself short of breath.
- **Skin irritation.** This becomes a more pronounced problem if your binding method of choice does not involve breathable, moisture-wicking fabric.
- **Lacerations.** If you are binding too tightly you run the risk of the fabric cutting into your skin and leaving painful markings.

Some severe issues you should watch out for:

- **Long-term rib damage.** Binding too tightly over long stretches of time can lead to rib warpage, fractures, or even broken bones in more severe cases.
- **Pleurisy.** Binding too tightly can also lead to inflammation of the lining of one's lungs. This is usually accompanied by a sharp pain in the chest when breathing or coughing.

HOW CAN I REDUCE MY RISK OF INJURY?

- It is inadvisable to bind for longer than 8-10 hours in a single day; 12 hours being the maximum. Binding for longer increases your risk of developing some of the issues mentioned above.
- Do not fall asleep while bound.
- It is inadvisable to engage in intense physical activity when bound. The restriction of your movement and breathing capacity coupled with high energy activity can be dangerous.
- When you remove your binding, cough several times to loosen up fluid. This is especially important if you hear wheezing in your lungs when you breathe in and out. This means you could be binding too tightly or for too long. If the symptoms persist, consult your physician.
- **Do not use ACE bandage or duct tape to bind. Neither of these materials are breathable or gentle on your skin.**
- Do not double up on binders because this increases your risk of damaging your body. Instead, try to use layers or patterns to divert eyes from your chest.
- Listen to your body. If you are in pain or unable to breathe, remove your binding and allow your body to rest.
- Use GoldBond or baby powder to make binding more comfortable and reduce damage to your skin.