



# SAFETY GUIDE TO GENDER AFFIRMING CARE

## CHEST BINDING

### What Is It?

Chest binding is the process of compressing breast tissue. Chest binding, also just referred to as binding, can be done using many different methods and supplies. You may experiment with different methods or alternate between varying methods of binding. You should always choose a binding method that allows you to breathe normally and feel comfortable when resting and moving.

**Most often you can use the following materials when binding depending on your chest size, build, preference, and budget:**

<b>Chest binder</b>	A tight garment, typically made of nylon and spandex, designed to compress the chest. Most binders resemble full-length or cropped tank tops that pull down over your head or open and close with zippers or Velcro. The size and type of binder you choose will depend on the brand, amount of chest or breast tissue and your personal preference.
<b>TransTape, TransGenX or Kinesiology tape</b>	Waterproof medical grade tapes such as TransTape, TransGenX and kinesiology (KT) tape can be used for chest binding. Most of these tapes can last for multiple days, are virtually undetectable under clothing and are waterproof. They can be a good option for binding when exercising, swimming, and sleeping because they do not wrap around the chest or restrict breathing and movement. If you have skin sensitivities or are allergic to latex, check what material the tape is made from. You should always conduct a skin test following the manufacturer's directions before using tape for binding. Note: Tapes should <i>never</i> be wrapped around your entire chest (joining end to end).
<b>Sports bras</b>	Tight-fitting sports bras made with Lycra can provide effective binding for some people. The material is designed to be breathable, decreasing the chances of side effects from binding. (Note: Wearing a bra may cause feelings of gender dysphoria for some people.)
<b>Athletic compression shirts</b>	Athletic compression shirts are made with spandex, or other stretchy materials, and are designed to have a next-to-skin fit. They are breathable and widely available at sports stores. (Note: This option is more effective if you have minimal chest or breast tissue.)

## How to Safely Bind

- **Find a binder that's the right size** — If your binder is too tight, it may cause difficulty breathing, increased pain or cause your skin to break down. If this occurs, you can alter the binder to fit your body, get a bigger size or try another method. Consult the website of the brand of chest binder you are using for their specific measurement instructions before purchase. If in-between sizes, always size up, not down.
- **Choose a safer binder** — Elastic bandages, duct tape or Saran Wrap are not safe ways to bind. These methods can restrict blood flow, make it hard to breathe, cause rashes and bruising and even break ribs. Stick to the materials and methods discussed under types of binding.
- **Choose a breathable material** — Examples of breathable material include Lycra and spandex. Binders made from non-breathable material can cause sores or rashes on your skin. You can minimize these side-effects by applying body powder to your skin before binding or wearing a thin undershirt made of fabric that wicks away sweat underneath your binder.
- **Keep binding materials clean** — To clean binding materials, follow the instructions that came with the garment. In general hand washing is best practice as it keeps garments intact for longer. Avoid using bleach or putting it in the dryer, as this can cause the material to break down and reduce the binder's effectiveness.
- **Be clean and dry before putting it on** — Make sure your skin is clean and completely dry before putting on a binder.
- **If you are using medical tape** — Wear a nipple guard under medical grade tape and remove it with a skin-safe adhesive-remover. If you find removal hard, try using protective barrier skin wipes before applying tape. Do not wrap the tape around your entire chest (joining end to end).
- **Limit binder use** — Avoid binding for more than eight hours a day.
- **Build strength** — Learn exercises and stretches to strengthen your back, shoulders, and chest wall to help ease some of the discomfort caused by binding.
- **Get help from a practitioner** — See a clinician if you experience pain, difficulty breathing, ongoing tingling/numbness, skin rash, or sores.
- **In hot weather** — Drink plenty of water, bind less tightly and for shorter periods of time, and wear a cotton undershirt or body powder to absorb sweat.

# TUCKING

## What is it?

Tucking is the processing of concealing the penis, testes, or both to achieve a smooth appearance. There are many different methods of tucking you may use depending on your comfortability and desired outcome. When tucking, the penis always goes between the legs. The testes and scrotum can go between the legs or inside the body. You can adapt these methods to whatever feels best for your body or find another way altogether. Below are two common methods of tucking:

### Option #1: Testes Between the Legs

This is the easiest option.

- Wrap the penis in tissue or a piece of soft, thin cotton.
- Tuck your testes and penis between your legs, and, if possible, the buttocks.
- Optional: Use a long strip of medical or sports tape down the penis and up the buttocks/lower back to keep it secure. Use additional tape as needed.
- Hold the arrangement in place with tight panties made from materials like spandex, Lycra or microfiber.

### Option #2: Testes Inside the Body

This is the smoothest-looking option. Some people prefer to tuck their testes inside of themselves. The goal here is to gently push the testes into the inguinal canals (the tube at the top of each testicle).

- Wrap the penis in tissue or a piece of soft, thin cotton.
- There is an opening to the inguinal canal at the base of each testicle. The opening has about the same diameter as a finger, though it can stretch. Using two or three fingers, gently lift each testicle up into the scrotum and through the corresponding inguinal ring.
- Once the testes are tucked, keep a hand firmly over the base of your genitals to prevent anything from slipping back out. Some people tuck the scrotum as well, while others wrap the scrotum around the penis and secure it with tape. Medical tape is safer than duct tape because it breathes better and is easier to remove.
- Next, pull back the penis between your legs and hold everything in place with tight panties, tape or a gaff. If you plan to use tape, shave your pubic hair first; this will make removing the tape more comfortable. If you have difficulty removing the tape, try soaking the area in warm water.

## How to Safely Tuck

- **Follow the method(s) that is most comfortable** — Follow the instructions provided above or the advice of a medical professional. Try switching between different ways of tucking if this helps ease discomfort.
- **Take it slow and listen to your body** — If you are new to tucking, start by tucking for shorter periods of time. Give yourself lots of time to practice. It's hard to learn a new skill when you feel rushed or stressed. So, if something does not feel right, untuck and try again later.
- **Keep an eye on body reactions** — After untucking, check for irritated skin, sores or rashes. Allow skin to heal before using products on it again.
- **Practice good hygiene** — Clean groin area as normal. Medical adhesive removers may be helpful for removing tape buildup and residue that normal soap may not be sufficient at. Use body powder in warm creases (such as thighs, buttocks, and genital skin) to prevent skin chafing and infection.
- **Get help from a practitioner** — See a clinician if you experience pain, difficulty breathing, ongoing tingling/numbness, skin rash, or sores.
- **Consider future outcomes** — Tucking regularly can affect fertility. Some people consider banking sperm or limiting how often they tuck gonads inside the body.
- **Get help from a practitioner** — See a clinician if you experience any of the following: aching or tingling or numbness that continues even when you are not tucking, skin rash, sores, blood in urine or orgasmic fluid, a feeling of inflammation or infection inside the genitals, or pain with urination, pain in the bladder or lower back.

# PACKING

## What Is It?

Packing is the process of using materials to create the appearance of a bulge in an individual's bottoms. The materials or item(s) used to pack are referred to as a packer.

**You may use a wide range of materials to pack depending on your desired functionality, budget, and preference:**

<b>Traditional packers</b>	If you want something that more closely resembles a penis, you can buy a packer in many sex stores or online. They come in various sizes, skin tones, and colors with or without foreskin and with or without testicles. Some can be used for sexual penetration, and some can be used to stand and urinate. They may be held in place by a jockstrap, harness or tight-fitting underwear.
<b>Non-flesh (prosthetic) penis</b>	A prosthetic penis is made to look and feel like a penis and testicles. It's designed to be attached to your body with medical adhesive or suction. Some models can be used for sexual penetration or urination while standing. (Note: Prosthetic penises are usually more expensive than packers).
<b>Do-it-yourself options</b>	The possibilities of homemade packer alternatives are endless. An affordable, do-it-yourself option is to fill an unlubricated condom with hair gel, tie a knot at the end, and place another condom overtop. Place it in some tight briefs or boxer briefs. (Note: This option is less durable than others and will need to be replaced frequently). Another option also includes packing a jockstrap with socks.

## How to Safely Pack

- **Keep packing materials clean** — To clean traditional packers and non-flesh penises, follow the instructions that came with the garment. In general hand washing with warm soapy water is best practice. To clean do-it-yourself options, replace single use items and clean reusable materials as normal according to best hygiene practices.
- **Avoid skin irritation** — Some people experience skin irritation from non-flesh penis materials. If you experience irritation, try wearing two pairs of underwear with the penis in between them to protect your skin. It may be useful to wear a non-lubricated condom, so the penis does not rub directly against your leg. Some people have reactions to the medical adhesive used to attach a prosthetic penis to the body. Test a small amount of the adhesive on your skin before using it to attach your penis.
- **Practice safer sex** — Consider wearing a condom if you are using a packer or prosthetic penis during sex to reduce the risk of transmitting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- **Get help from a practitioner** — See a clinician if you experience pain, skin irritation, or have questions on proper usage.

# PADDING

## What Is It?

Padding is the process of using materials to create the appearance of fuller breast tissue, hips, and/or buttocks. Padding serves as another non-surgical method of expressing one's gender.

## There is a wide variety of products and materials you may use when padding:

<b>Padded panties</b>	These are often used to make hips look wider and buttocks fuller.
<b>Padded bras</b>	These undergarments may be preferable if you have some breast growth but want your breasts to appear larger.
<b>Breast forms</b>	These often are made of soft silicone gel and either adhere to your body or are placed in your bra. They are available in different shapes, sizes and skin colors. Some breast forms have nipples, and some do not. Other breast forms may be made of foam instead, in which these are just placed in your bra.
<b>Bras with pockets</b>	These are also referred to as mastectomy bras. They are designed for breast forms as they hold them to the chest.
<b>Do-it-yourself options</b>	The possibilities of homemade padding alternatives are endless. You may opt to use materials already at home to pad breast, hip, or buttocks region.

## How to Safely Pad

- **Keep padding materials clean** — To clean padding materials follow the instructions that came with the garment. In general, hand-washing bras and panties or using the gentle cycle of the washing machine and hanging them to dry is best practice. Sweat can cause breast forms to break down, so it's a good idea to wash them with warm water and soap after use. To clean do-it-yourself options, replace single use items and clean reusable materials as normal according to best hygiene practices.