

# Safe Binding

A resource guide to chest binding





## What is Chest Binding?

Chest binding is the compression of chest tissue to flatten the breasts to reduce their size and appearance. It can help to reduce chest dysphoria if you were assigned female at birth (AFAB) and can allow you to become more comfortable with your body.

Binding isn't just for trans men AFAB, and is practiced by intersex and gender diverse clients too.

Safety must be your top priority if you choose to bind your chest. Using duct tape, elastic bandages or KT (kinetic) tape can cause serious injury and endanger your chances for success with top surgery.

Other factors affecting your success are frequency, length of time binding, breast size, and binding method used.

Our clinicians are specialized in assessing binding practices and helping you manage any risk that may be associated with binding.

## Methods

### **Binder/medical compression shirt**

Binders are the safest and most recommended way to bind. Binders can be just for the chest, or full torso to reduce the size of hips.

### **Sports bra**

Bras with higher content of Lycra compress better. Avoid layering multiple sports bras.

### **Athletic compression shirt**

Made from Spandex or Lycra, these are designed to wick sweat away. They typically work best for those with less breast tissue.

### **Layering shirts**

Practice caution! Wearing a lot of clothes can become hot. Aim to use moisture-wicking fabric for sweating. Each shirt should be larger/looser as you layer. Button-up shirts work as a final layer to conceal your chest, but this is not recommended because you can overheat easily and pass out.



### **Important Information**

- Choosing the right size and fabric are the most important steps
- Fabrics that wick sweat away are best
- Always keep your binders clean
- Body powder can help reduce irritation
- Never use duct tape, elastic bandages or KT (kinetic) tape
- Never sleep in your binder
- Avoid wearing binder for more than 8 hours
- Never wear binders when you are sick as this can cause fluid to build up in your lungs and can become very dangerous

# Risks

## **What are the risks associated with unsafe or improper binding?**

- Pain
- Scaring
- Overheating
- Shortness of breath
- Fluid build-up in lungs (never sleep in your binder)
- Reduced exercise tolerance
- Speech difficulties
- Fractured and/or broken ribs
- Back pain
- Restricted lung capacity if you have spinal issues or a lung disease like asthma

## Binder Size

A chest binder that fits properly will help to minimize side effects including pain, discomfort, sweating, and irritation.

## How to measure your chest size

Use a flexible tape measurer. Stand in front of a mirror when measuring to ensure that you are not looking down when taking the measurement.

Breathing normally and relaxed, wrap the measuring tape around your back, placing the tape under armpits and directly above nipples or at the fullest area of your chest. Write your measurement down rounding up to the fullest half inch.



## Helpful Tips

### **Prevent irritation.**

Sweat-wicking binders work best. Also, powders and deodorants can help regulate perspiration and irritation.

### **Smaller isn't better.**

Binders are designed to be tight. However, if you notice a difference in your breathing or circulation or if the binder digs into your skin, yours may be too small. This can cause damage to your body and skin.



### **Binding shouldn't hurt.**

While you will notice the compression, binding should never be a painful experience.

### **Never use duct tape, elastic bandages or KT (kinetic) tape.**

They can restrict movement, breathing, and can even fracture your ribs.

### **Take a break.**

Sleeping with your binding on can cause damage to your body. Wear your binders for no more than 8 hours a day.

# Gender and Sexuality Affirming Care

Desert AIDS Project offers high quality, culturally competent services to our transgender, intersex, and gender diverse clients.

We empower and engage our clients in ongoing relationships with their primary care clinicians, addressing their full spectrum of health and wellness needs. Our medical team works closely with other disciplines in behavioral health, community health, nutrition services, and social services to provide all of our clients with compassionate and comprehensive care.

Our clinicians follow World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) guidelines and obtain WPATH training and continuing education in the assessment and treatment of gender dysphoria.

## Patient Rights & Responsibilities

You have the right to:

- Be heard and understood by your provider and care team
- Be fairly evaluated for treatment and referrals
- Access an equal standard of care as any other patient
- Be provided with assistance or referrals to manage psychological and physical health issues that might impact your hormone therapy
- If appropriate, to be given access to gender affirming hormone therapy

## You have a responsibility to:

- Accurately convey your symptoms (story and history) of gender dysphoria and gender identity development to your provider
- Follow your treatment plan and take medications as prescribed
- Follow up with care as recommended and express your concerns to your clinician

**Schedule an Appointment with our  
Trans Navigation team by calling**

760-323-2118 or email [TransCare@desertaidproject.org](mailto:TransCare@desertaidproject.org)

Transgender Health Services  
Desert AIDS Project  
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Palm Springs, CA 92262

For more information visit  
[desertaidproject.org/transgenderhealth](http://desertaidproject.org/transgenderhealth)



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