

Clothing, body image and osteoporosis

Finding clothes to suit a changing body shape
after vertebral compression fractures

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This leaflet covers specific information on clothing and body image. If you would like more general information on osteoporosis, please ask us for a copy of our publication *All About Osteoporosis*.

Foreword

The way we think and feel about our bodies and the way that we look can have a big impact on our lives. Appearance is important to most people in the UK and a large proportion of the general public (current estimates are in the region of 70-80%) have significant appearance-related concerns that affect their everyday life.

The emphasis that society seems to place on appearance can present particular challenges for people who look different in anyway to what we might consider “the norm”. Many people who are living with a visible difference cope very well with these challenges but others experience considerable levels of concern and distress that can negatively impact on quality of life.

Osteoporosis is one of the many conditions that can affect body shape because of the effects of broken bones (fractures) in the spine. However, not everybody with osteoporosis will experience body shape changes and even if your body does change shape, it does not mean that you will have body image concerns.

For those who could use a little help with feeling more confident about their appearance, this leaflet gives some good practical advice. This leaflet does not provide all of the answers but it does provide some simple tips to help you look and feel more confident and comfortable. It focuses on clothing in terms of comfort, style and safety. Providing emotional support is more difficult in a leaflet. However, talking to someone about any problems you might be facing can be a good way to move towards feeling better about the way you look. The National Osteoporosis Society has a range of services that can help, such as the Helpline, website discussion forum and support groups.



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Introduction

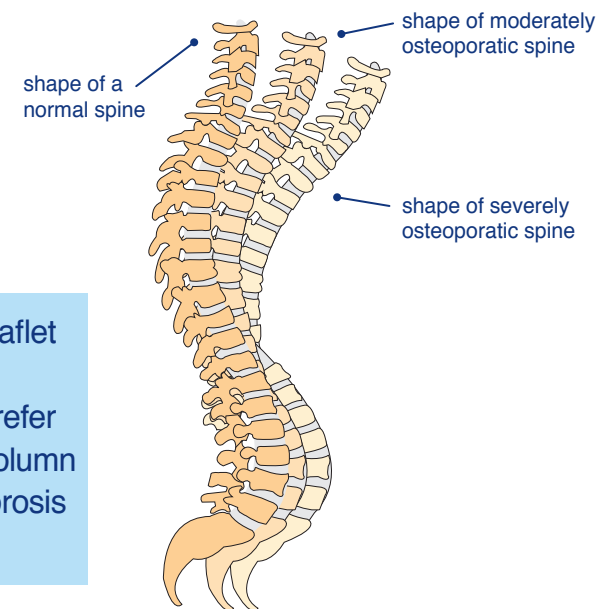
Body image, how we perceive our physical appearance, is very important for all of us and contributes to how we feel about ourselves and appear to others. Finding both comfortable and stylish clothes can be a challenge because of the height loss, curvature of the spine and widening of the girth that sometimes accompanies spinal fractures.

The National Osteoporosis Society is often asked for information about clothing. This leaflet aims to give practical suggestions about how to tackle some of the problems of finding clothes to suit a changing body shape and includes some useful clothing tips from members of the charity. The leaflet has been written primarily for people who have experienced multiple compression fractures in the spine. The information and content will not be relevant for everyone with a diagnosis of osteoporosis or for those people who have only had one or two spinal fractures where body shape changes are unlikely to be an issue. Some of the resources and contact details included in this leaflet may however be useful for people with other types of osteoporotic fracture for example, hip or conditions such as osteoarthritis as well as osteoporosis.



How do spinal fractures caused by osteoporosis affect body shape?

Contrary to popular belief, an expanding waistline and protruding stomach in people who have had spinal fractures does not always mean that they have put on weight or they are getting fatter. In fact these changes to body shape are usually due to the effects of spinal fractures. Osteoporotic fractures in the spine are often referred to as vertebral compression fractures because bones have become squashed or compressed due to their reduced strength. These spinal bones heal like any other bone but do not return to their previous shape. When this has occurred in several spinal bones, significant height loss and often a forward stoop (kyphosis) occurs. This may cause less room for the abdominal organs and so the stomach is pushed outwards. So although the waistline has expanded this is not actually caused by an increase in weight.



For the purposes of this leaflet the terms spine/vertebral/ vertebral compression all refer to fractures in the spinal column caused by having osteoporosis and fragile bones.

The impact of spinal fractures on body image

The way we feel about our bodies can impact on all aspects of our daily life. If we are wearing clothes that fit well and feel comfortable this inevitably helps to boost our confidence and morale. Feeling unhappy about how your body looks can result in low self esteem and affects many people both emotionally and psychologically. Some people assume that older women and men are not as concerned about how they look when they get older but there is, of course, no age limit to having an interest and concern about our appearance. People who call the charity's Helpline sometimes describe the experience of spinal fractures and changes to their body shape in terms of loss, with women, in particular, describing feelings of diminished physical attractiveness and femininity. Others have told us how they have declined invitations to social gatherings because they are too distressed and self-conscious about the look of their body coupled with their ongoing difficulties of finding suitable clothes.

Comments about body image from callers to our Helpline

'I caught sight of myself in a shop window and was shocked to see how old and bent over I look now'.

'I can't bear to look at myself in the mirror'

'I don't have the trim figure I used to have and none of my clothes in my wardrobe fit anymore'.

'I look 8 months pregnant these days!'

'I don't feel I can go to my granddaughters wedding because I struggle to find any clothes that make me look attractive and hide my spinal curvature'.

A negative body image is not the experience of everyone with spinal fractures, however it is important to acknowledge the real distress suffered by a significant proportion of those affected and for them to know that they are not alone and there are positive ways to tackle these problems.

The clothing problems

If you have sustained spinal fractures you may begin to notice that your clothes do not fit in the same way as they used to. Your dresses or shirts can poke open at the back of the neck and may also feel tighter across your back. A shortened chest cavity can mean all bought clothes are too long and trousers can end up under the bust line. The loss of the waistline and a protruding tummy can make skirts and trousers pull across the abdomen and hemlines can become uneven.

Kyphosis
(may be more pronounced than this in some people)

Dresses and tops are all tight here

Uneven hemline



Shortened chest cavity

Tummy bulges, pulls skirts and trousers here



Case history- One woman's experiences

Joan has first hand experience of the difficulties of finding clothing to suit her figure changes. Joan was first diagnosed with osteoporosis in the mid 1980s and over the years has sustained several spinal fractures. She is currently six inches shorter than she used to be, and where her spine has reduced in height she has developed a slight stoop and a tummy bulge in the front below her ribs. As a trustee of a charity and a keen traveller, having clothes which are both comfortable and smart is very important.

Joan says clothes shopping can be very frustrating. "I end up having to make do with second best as it's hard to find clothes that fit me and, if I do buy a ready made outfit, invariably it will have to be altered," she says. "Things don't hang properly, all of the tops I buy are too long and all of the skirts I buy are too tight around the waist."

To discover more about some of Joan's clothing problems we invited her to choose a small selection of unworn clothes which were gathering dust at the back of her wardrobe. We then accompanied Joan to a local clothing alteration business to see, first hand, the type of adjustments that would be used to rejuvenate some of these garments, so that they fitted her perfectly.

Example 1



BEFORE

Joan describes this cream jacket as a bit of an impulse buy because it was a sales bargain and it had a designer label! She has never worn it because it sags at the neck line and is a poor fit all round. By clever tailoring, the fit at Joan's neck and shoulder line has been transformed and the jacket has become a valuable addition to her range of outfits.



AFTER

Example 2



BEFORE



AFTER

The multi-coloured blouse is too long due to the shortening of Joan's trunk and although it accommodates her spinal curvature, the back of the garment looks baggy. Shortening the top and by introducing some darts at the back has made this a smart separate which looks good with both skirts and trousers.

Example 3



Joan tends to avoid dresses and prefers to buy separates such as blouses with skirts and trousers. Her black skirt is tilted up towards the front due to the length taken up by Joan's abdomen. The hem line is also very uneven and the skirt is too long for Joan's height. By adjusting the waist band and by taking in the side seams so that they once more hang at right angles to the floor, a once discarded skirt is now a favourite addition to her wardrobe.



“If I do buy a ready made outfit, invariably it will have to be altered.”

What to look for when buying clothes

One of the most important things to remember about choosing and buying clothes is to continue to buy what you like. Clothes are the first impression we give people of ourselves and inevitably reflect our personality. For people with significant postural changes, this is easier said than done and however wide the choice of garments appears to be, the hunt for a suitable outfit can be difficult.

Sometimes this means that people have to compromise on style and fashion in order to find a garment that actually fits them and is comfortable to wear. While there is no perfect solution in terms of finding clothes to fit a changing body shape, there are a number of things that you can do to draw the eye away from the main problem areas. The following information is intended to help to give some ideas and pointers of what to look for when buying clothes and includes advice on garment styles, fabrics and colours.



Clothing styles for women

- Look for one good quality outfit. Generally a two piece outfit based on a jacket and teamed with a skirt or trousers will work better than a dress. You can change the look of the outfit by wearing different coloured tops and accessories.
- Opt for clothing that is loose, tailored or just slightly fitted.
- If you do decide on a dress, think about choosing a design with an empire waist, dropped waist or A-line. An asymmetrical design can also work well if drooping hemlines are a problem.
- Necklines may be better rounded, in the form of a slight 'v' or a soft cowl.
- Blouses with gathers or pleats from the neckline, shoulder or a high yoke will help to accommodate the curvature of the spine.
- Raglan, dropped or dolman sleeves will often work well and are easier to move around in.
- Sometimes adding your own shoulder pads to shirts, jackets and dresses can help to create a good shape.
- Styles which incorporate two or more layers of different material can be very flattering and can disguise problem areas.
- Look for tops with side slits which can make them sit better around the waist or on the hips.
- The use of colourful fashionable accessories to dress up your outfit will distract attention away from your back and shoulders. Wraps for example, are fashionable and practical for concealing shoulders.
- Consider garments that you, or a dressmaker/tailor, can alter fairly easily since it is likely that an off-the-peg ready-to-wear garment will need some alteration to accommodate your figure changes.
- Think about choosing clothes with easy-to-manage fasteners (for example, back fastening zips can be a problem for some people).

Here are a few more suggestions about clothing styles from our members:

- Blouson tops with a loose band (or smocked hemline), if made in the same fabric as an accompanying skirt, can look like a dress.
- Slimma Clippa Trousers (sold through the Damart catalogue) have an adjustable waistband for added comfort.
- Skirts and trousers, with elasticated waistbands, are less restrictive and will accommodate a tummy bulge. Eastex and Rowland's clothing manufacturers have a good range of stylish skirts with elasticated waists.
- Pinafore dresses can also help to hide bulges and can be worn with both blouses and sweaters.
- Maternity jeans - this suggestion has come from one of our members who loves wearing jeans but can no longer fit into a 'standard' pair. 'Over the bump' jeans are slim-legged and have a soft stretchable panel which covers the tummy with an elastic waist band. The panel is easily disguised with a slightly longer top.
- Wrap around skirts.
- To avoid the discomfort of a tight waistband, unpick the waistband and sew the skirt onto a full-length slip. This also ensures the skirt hangs evenly.
- Petite clothing ranges for jackets and tops can sometimes provide a better fit for women who have experienced some shortening of the trunk since they are designed for women 5' 3" or under and are proportioned accordingly.

- Angela Gore shirtwaister dresses – a loose fitting style without a waist band (retailed by Eric Hill 0844 557 2590).
 - Men’s trousers may fit better if the waist line has disappeared - in fact the newer fashion styles of trousers and jeans are often worn a few inches below the natural waistline or just at the hip bones.
 - Cosyfeet softfold hold-ups (stockings) also available in petite length and warmer ribbed design, one member’s suggestion as an alternative to maternity tights.
 - Cotton jersey nightwear for comfort and ease of dressing.
-

Colour

People tend to avoid bright colours in their wardrobe when they are self-conscious about their body. Blacks and greys feel safer but the introduction of some colour can make you feel healthier particularly in the drab winter months, and help to draw attention away from the parts of your body that make you feel the most uncomfortable.





Here are a few tips:

- Consider wearing some colourful accessories such as a scarf or bangle to brighten up and enhance your outfit.
- For shorter and more petite women, dressing from top to bottom in a monochromatic or one-colour scheme can help to make you look taller.
- Bold prints and stripes needn't be avoided, vertical stripes in particular can make you appear taller and will help to hide problem areas.
- Pin stripe trousers in a dark fabric can look very smart and flattering.
- A light pattern on a solid colour can work well and helps to create a softer appearance.

If you are unsure about what colours look best on you, some people find it helpful to have a consultation with a colour or image consultant. Consultants use coloured drapes placed close up to your face to find out which ones enhance your skin tone, eyes and hair colour. You are then given a small swatch book of materials in the colours that best suit you.

Fabric choice

Natural fabrics such as cotton are usually the most comfortable to wear and do not reflect the light from pressure points as do some synthetic fabrics. Also try to avoid any fabric that is likely to cling to your stomach; ideally you want to aim for a fabric which will fall nicely over your mid section.

Made-to-measure clothes

Having a made-to-measure outfit is always going to be the best way of ensuring clothes fit well and suit your size and style, although this may be pushing the budget too far. Nevertheless it may be something to consider if you are looking for an outfit for a wedding or an extra special occasion.

Personal shoppers

In your search for a ready made outfit you may wish to consider the personal shopping service that many large department stores offer. This service is often free and you can book a session in advance. Personal shoppers can help to take the 'leg work' out of shopping and will assist you in picking out an outfit to suit your needs. Some of the larger department stores also offer an alteration service.

At the end of the day when shopping for clothes, do go with an open mind and try on lots of different shapes and styles and clothes in different colour-ways until you find what is right for you. Your clothing preferences should be a personal choice and not always constrained by what you feel you should and should not be wearing because of the shape of your body.



Not forgetting men's clothing problems!

Much of this leaflet has focused on women's clothing issues. Finding affordable and flattering clothing for men with body shape changes (due to spinal fractures) can be equally challenging. For both men and women, a protruding abdomen and having a kyphosis can mean that ready made clothes such as shirts or jackets have to be bought in a much larger size so that they can fit around the stomach and accommodate a curved spine. Trousers tend to have to be worn quite low (below the level of the waist line) because of the tummy bulge and this can often cause trousers to slip down. Having to buy clothes in larger sizes can also limit choice and you may end up paying more for your clothes particularly if they are purchased from outlets that specifically cater for bigger sizes.

Once again the best sources of advice on tackling clothing issues have come from our members, here are a few more tips:

- Avoid any clothing that is too tight, buy relaxed-fit clothing that is not overly baggy but is loose enough to be comfortable.
- When buying trousers 'off the peg' it may be necessary to buy a pair with a longer inside leg measurement to ensure the correct waist size. Alterations may then be needed to achieve the correct inside leg measurement.
- Braces can be more comfortable than a tight waistband on trousers or a belt and will help to ensure that your trousers remain in position.
- A jacket worn undone can hide an oversized shirt and help to disguise a tummy bulge.
- You may need to wear a longer length shirt or top to accommodate the lower waist style.

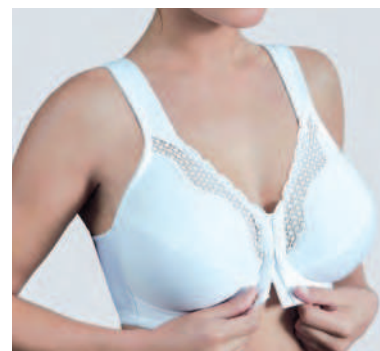
Although finding suitable casual wear can be challenging, trying to buy a ready made suit is often nearly impossible for men with significant postural changes. This can be a particular problem if you are expected to dress more formally for work. One of our members said that in order to get a suit to fit around his middle he had ended up buying one three sizes too big. Although some alterations will be possible it is worth considering investing in a made-to-measure suit with at least two pairs of trousers to increase the suit's longevity.



Clothing alterations

You can usually find a dressmaker or tailor for clothing alterations (or repairs) by looking in your local telephone directory. There are also a few specialist organisations that offer a bespoke clothing and alteration service for people with disabilities or special needs. They are able to carry out a variety of alterations to clothes such as levelling of hemlines and readjusting waistbands as well as making up an individual garment (see contact list).

If, however, you or someone you know has reasonable sewing skills it is possible to carry out some minor alterations to an existing outfit yourself. If you are nervous about first attempts to alter a garment a good tip from one of our members is to have a trial run on one of your old disused garments or experiment on one from a nearly new or charity shop. See appendix on pages 34–39 for dressmaking tips on how to go about altering clothes to help tackle some of the common clothing problems associated with spinal fractures.



Bras and underwear

The hunt for a comfortable bra generates many calls to the charity's Helpline. A few clothing manufacturers are beginning to take note of the demand for comfortable underwear to meet more specialised needs, and there are several suitable styles out on the market today.

It goes without saying that a bra must be of a fit to support the weight of the breasts and should be firm but not too tight. As well as being uncomfortable, a poorly fitting bra can contribute to neck, shoulder and back problems, therefore investing in a good supportive bra can make a big difference. For people who have already sustained spinal fractures, this is especially important as a suitable bra will help to maintain posture and give much needed support to an already weakened spine.

Wherever possible it is a good idea to have your bra size measured professionally; one of the larger department stores or specialist corsetry or lingerie shops will be able to offer this service.

Bra sizes can vary considerably between manufacturers so, even if you feel you know your bra or cup size, it is always recommended to try on several different sizes and styles to see what feels most comfortable. You may, for example, need a larger chest size but smaller cup size to accommodate your shape changes.

A very common site for a vertebral fracture is in the thoracic (middle part of the spine) area and often corresponds to where the bra strap sits. Some women therefore find sports type bras with a front-fastening and a T-shape back comfortable, others opt for an under-wired bra because they do not ride up as a band does; an under-wire design however, is unlikely to be suitable or comfortable for those women with more pronounced spinal curvature. Front-fastening bras generally make dressing easier, and there are some styles available that have magnetic fastenings or poppers to replace fiddly bra hooks. For smaller breasted women a bra slip or a vest/camisole with a supportive 'shelf lining' may be an option.

Specialist lingerie shops such as Rigby & Peller also have a made to measure bra and alteration service. Having a bespoke bra made up is likely to be too expensive for most people although the company will make alterations to some of their ready made bras. A back fastening bra for example can be converted to a front or even side opening one. Other specialist alteration workshops can sometimes change the fastenings on certain bras replacing bra hooks with fastenings such as Velcro to help make dressing easier.

Bra extenders can be used to give you some extra room at the back of a bra; these can be obtained from some lingerie shops, sewing and haberdashery departments or on the internet. Just to note however, if you increase the width at the back too much, there is a danger that it will push the straps out towards the shoulders causing slippage. People with narrow shoulders or a kyphosis quite often have problems with bra straps slipping off their shoulders. One tip offered by a member of the charity is to fix a piece of elastic approximately one inch wide between the straps about five to six inches above the back of the bra to help to counter this problem. If you are able to wear a bra with detachable straps, clear plastic ones can be substituted; these are non-slip and therefore stay in position. Alternatively you can buy a discreet plastic bra strap retainer which you can sew into the shoulder seam of a garment.

A final thought about bras is that they do wear out and consequently lose their elasticity and support. Many bra fitters would suggest that the average bra life is 6-12 months but obviously this will depend on how much you wear it and also how you wash it. Hand washing a bra in non-biological powder is considered to be the best way however if you prefer to machine wash, first place your bra in a pillow case or laundry bag and wash on a low temperature. Also if you do find a really good bra that is comfortable and suits your body shape you may want to buy a couple more, as bra manufacturers have a tendency to discontinue certain lines after a period of time. Do bear in mind that your bra size or body shape may change, so it is advisable to be re-measured from time to time to ensure that your chosen bra style continues to fit you properly.



The following list gives details of a selection of bras that have either been recommended by members of the charity or by other organisations who were contacted as part of the research for this leaflet. It must be recognised that the list is not exhaustive and the bras mentioned are in no part endorsed by the National Osteoporosis Society nor will they meet everyone's needs. This also applies to other clothing products referred to in this leaflet.

***Anita Range:**

Anita Jana soft support Bra –
back fastening with stretchy back body panel.

Anita Mylena –
front-fastening bra

Adaptawear

Corebra –
front-fastening with magnetic and hook and loop fastenings. (not suitable for people with pacemakers)

Eezee bra –
front closure bra with flat hooks and finger loops – suitable for people with limited hand and arm mobility

Discretely Different

Cheryl Soft Comfort Bra –
fastener free, can be put on over the head or pulled up from the feet.

Katie Soft Comfort Bra -
this bra offers more support than the Cheryl bra and is also fastener free.

Eden House

Magic Bra range –
front-fastening available in a lace, cotton or 'original' design.

***Glamorise**

Soft shoulders –
front-fastening bra, has a T-back design.

***Miss Mary of Sweden range**

Front-fastening bras and designs for the fuller figure with reinforced soft cups, plus wide adjustable straps.

***Royce** (also see contact list)

Comfi-bra –
front-fastening

Silver Post Surgery Bra –
front-fastening

***Sloggi**

Sloggi double comfort top –soft pull on bra probably most suitable for those women with leaner figures and a smaller bust.

*These bras are available from a variety of high street lingerie shops or via online/mail-order companies. For other featured bras see the company contact details at the back of the leaflet.

***Silhouette**

Front-fastening soft bra –
with lace trim and posture back support

***Triumph**

104 style –
front-fastening bra

***Vanityfair**

531 style –
front-fastening cotton posture corrector bra has comfort straps which help to avoid shoulder grooving.

For additional information, the Disabled Living Foundation have produced a fact sheet entitled 'Choosing a bra.'

Pants, vests and slippers

Sometimes the more traditional styles of pants and vests are less restrictive and generally more comfortable to wear. Some people like to wear a pair of pants which give greater coverage or a style with a longer cuffed leg. Also vests and slippers with built up shoulder straps tend to be better than those with thin ribbon straps as they stay in position. You may need to shop around for the more traditional styles of underwear but specialist lingerie shops and mail-order companies do still stock these products.

Continence problems

Many men and women as they get older experience some form of urinary incontinence, however this is not just a problem of old age it can also affect younger people, especially women. Causes of incontinence are numerous and for women, the effects of pregnancy, childbirth and the menopause on muscle strength can contribute to this problem. For people with kyphotic changes in the spine, the subsequent loss of space in the abdominal region can increase the pressure on the bladder and pelvic floor and may sometimes lead to stress incontinence. This is where leakage of urine occurs when there is a sudden extra pressure within the abdomen, such as when you cough or sneeze. If this is a problem for you, do speak to your doctor. They may suggest a referral to a physiotherapist for advice on pelvic floor exercises or to a specialist nurse or continence advisor who will be able to advise on different products and protective clothing to help manage this problem. Some continence aids will be available to you on the NHS, but some items you may have to purchase yourself particularly if you prefer a different brand than those supplied. There are many specialist companies who supply continence products including 'ordinary looking' pants or Y-fronts for men which are designed to hold a pad

or have a pad built into the gusset. Some styles are also available with a drop down front for people who have difficulty dressing and undressing.

Corsets and back braces

Wearing a corset or brace which supports the back would naturally sound appropriate and useful. However, many health professionals do not recommend corsets to support a curved spine as they tend to encourage back muscles to weaken resulting in further pain problems. They would rather encourage people to work on strengthening their body's own 'muscular corset' by exercising back muscles to improve and maintain their strength rather than relying too heavily on a supportive garment. However, sometimes a corset may be helpful if worn for a limited duration and for specific activities which an individual might find difficult to do otherwise, such as shopping or car journeys. Unfortunately, they are often awkward to put on and take off and having one that fits comfortably and provides support in the right places may be difficult to find if bought 'ready made'. If you feel that you would benefit from a corset, your GP or specialist may be able to refer you to an Appliance or Orthotics Department at your local hospital to have one specially made or fitted.

Adaptive clothing and dressing aids

Adaptive clothing is a general name for clothing that has been specifically designed for people with disabilities or for individuals who have difficulty dressing. Not everyone with spinal fractures is going to need specialist clothing but it may be suitable for people with more profound postural changes or for those with physical limitations caused by other medical problems. For example, clothing with side zips or garments with open backs can make the task of dressing considerably easier for men and women who use a wheelchair - particularly if they are unable to stand independently and need to be able to dress whilst seated. For people who have reduced strength in their hands there are styles of clothing which are easier to pull on, such as, dresses or tops with necklines that allow for over-the-head dressing. Clothing is also available with zips with easy to grab tags or velcro fasteners instead of buttons.



Dressing Aids

There are various dressing aids available ranging from zip pullers and dressing sticks to devices to help people who have difficulty bending forwards to put on socks and stockings. More detailed information about dressing aids can be found in The Disabled Living Foundation's fact sheet entitled *Equipment to assist with dressing and putting on footwear*.

Ideas for clothing after fractures affecting the limbs

People who fracture a bone in one of their limbs often have tenderness, swelling and limited movement of the affected arm/leg. A splint or plaster of Paris may need to be applied for a time until healing has taken place. All of these things will limit your choice of clothing.

Clothes should not restrict the fracture site and so need to be stretchy and/or loose fitting. Look for clothes that are easy to take on and off. When getting dressed it is easier to put the affected limb in to the garment first and when getting undressed remove it last. Sometimes it may be necessary to unpick the seams of tops or trousers to provide a comfortable and unrestricted fit.

If an arm has been fractured buttons and zips will be difficult to manage for a while. Alternative fastenings such as Velcro may be considered. Stretchy tops with larger necklines provide another option.

Footwear

The charity often gets calls to the Helpline from people enquiring about suitable footwear. There is no specific guidance about this other than the obvious that shoes should be comfortable and fit you well. For people at risk of falling and less stable on their feet, the following features may help to reduce the risk of a slip or a trip. Wear a light shoe that is well-fitted, your shoes should not ride up and down on your heel when you walk nor should your toes feel squashed. In addition, choose a shoe with a smallish heel with a good grip on the sole. Although the image of the shoe opposite is for men, it does demonstrate some of the key features for comfort and safety. Women's shoes, with similar features, are also available.

For people with specific foot problems, a referral to a podiatrist may be necessary. Podiatrists are trained to assess and treat many foot (and nail) problems including the casting for custom made orthotics. For example, an innersole may be provided for people to wear in their shoes, to help correct problems such as flat feet or fallen arches. A podiatrist may also be able to give you advice about suitable footwear. If you require surgical footwear or your shoes need to be specially adapted, you may be referred to the Orthotics Department at your local hospital. Occasionally after a hip fracture repair or following a total hip replacement (for conditions such as osteoarthritis) people can experience some leg length inequality and a shoe lift or raise may be indicated to help to improve mobility and gait.

Some people may have medical problems that can result in painful swollen feet and therefore require shoes which are easily adjustable to accommodate the changes in the size of the feet. There are various online and mail-order companies that sell specialist footwear - see other sources of information and useful contacts.



In responding to enquiries, the charity is aware that there are people struggling to accept the body shape changes that can occur as a result of fractures. We hope that the practical tips and ideas included in this leaflet will help to address some of these issues. However, we also hope it will encourage people with fractures to feel more confident about themselves despite their changed body shape.

Appendix - how to do some basic alterations to clothing yourself

Gaping back neck

This may be improved by putting a small dart (fold in the fabric) either side of the centre back (CB) or, if there is a centre back seam, shaping it into the neck.

(a) Unpick the facing and collar at the neckline across the back neck.

(b) Put the garment on and get a helper to pin the darts or the centre back seam as shown in figure 1.

(c) Pin the corresponding amount in the CB of the facing and collar. This is best sewn as a seam instead of a dart.

(d) Sew in the darts/seams. Press. (figure 2).

(e) Re-assemble the collar and facing. (figure 3).

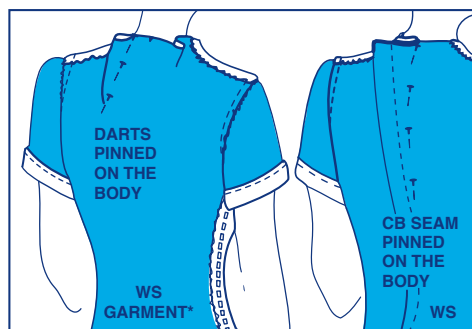


FIGURE 1

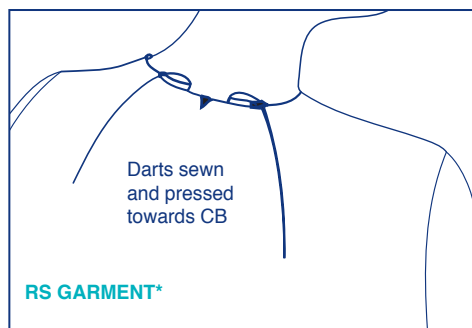


FIGURE 2

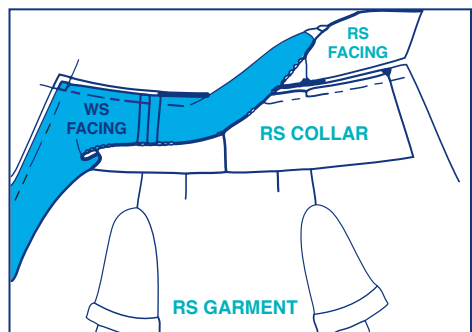


FIGURE 3

* Wrong side of garment

* Right side of garment

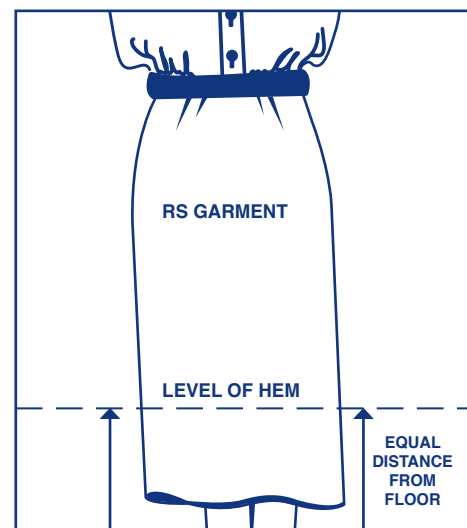


FIGURE 4

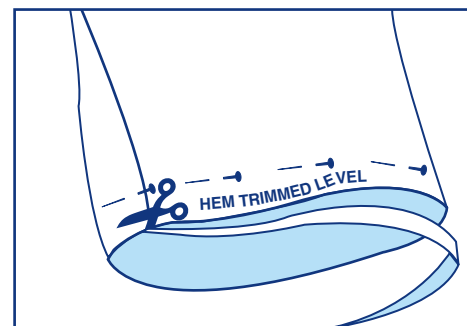


FIGURE 5

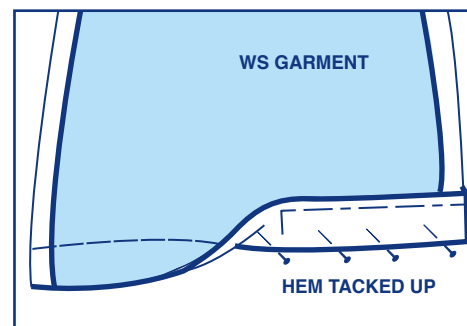


FIGURE 6

Altering an uneven hemline

An uneven hemline can spoil the look of a garment but can be remedied fairly easily, although you will need some help with this.

(a) Firstly unpick the hem and press it flat on the wrong side of the garment.

(b) Put the garment on and get your helper to establish the shortest part of the hem.

(c) Measuring up from the floor, mark this level all the way around the rest of the hem (figure 4). For best results use a hem levelling/ marking device (available from most haberdashery departments).

(d) Decide on the width of the hem and trim it level all around the hem. (figure 5).

(e) Neaten the hem edge

(f) Then turn the hem up evenly and secure by hand or machine. (figure 6).

(g) Press lightly to complete.

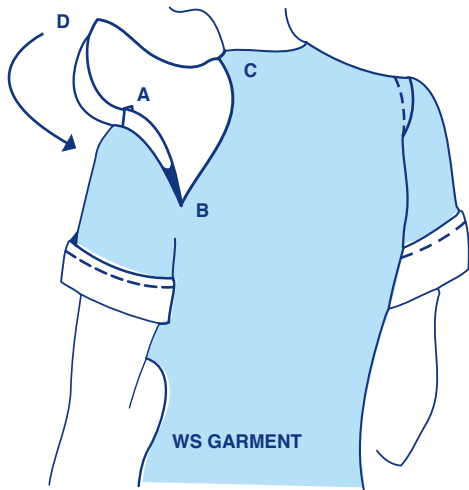


FIGURE 7

Rounded Shoulder Line

The introduction of a 1-2cm shoulder pad can help to re-define and balance the shoulder line. However this is only possible on fairly easy fitting garments.

- With the garment inside out, position the shoulder pad as shown in the left hand diagram. With the edge of the pad aligned to the edge of the armhole seam.
- Stitch firmly through the seam allowances at points A-B-C-D to complete (figure 7).

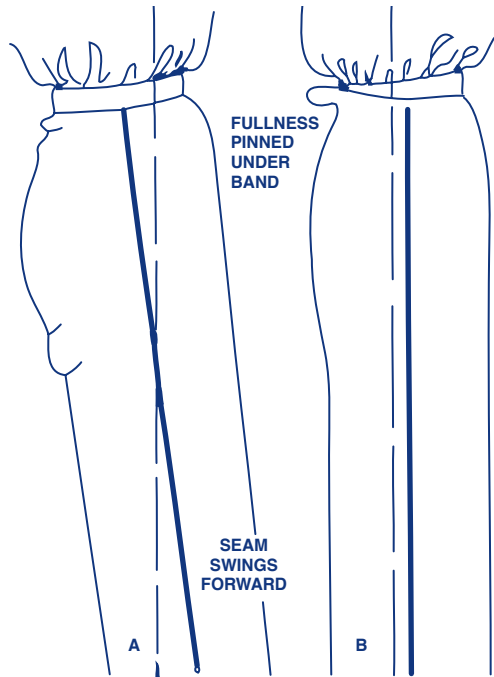


FIGURE 8

Skirts or Trousers that swing towards the front (with a fitted waistband)

This is quite a common problem resulting from the extra length taken up by the abdomen. (figure 8A).

This alteration requires the removal of the waistband across the back of the skirt to approx 5cms past the side seam on each side.

- Put the skirt on (right side out) and get a helper to pin out a pleat along and below the waistband at the back until the garment hangs straight and the side seams are at right angles to the floor. (figure 8B).

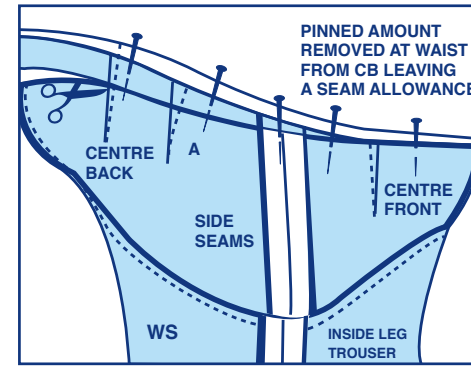


FIGURE 9

- Note the amount pinned out.
- Remove the waist band as described above.
- Fold the back in half and pin the waist and the side seams together or if altering trousers drop one leg inside the other.
- Measure the noted amount at the centre back drawing a graduated line to approx 3cms past the side seams. Trim this away (figure 9).

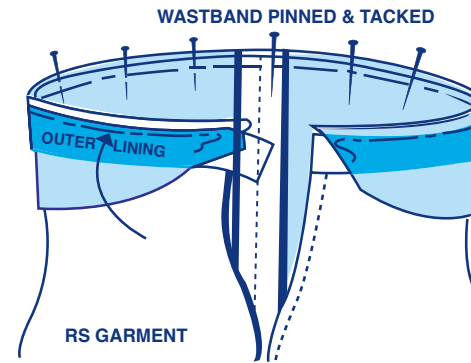


FIGURE 10

- Check the size of the new waistband increase and lengthen the darts or form a small pleat with the excess. (figure 10). Re-apply the waistband.

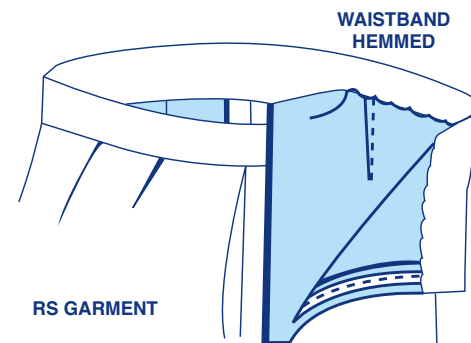


FIGURE 11

- Press and hem the waistband edge to finish. (figure 11).

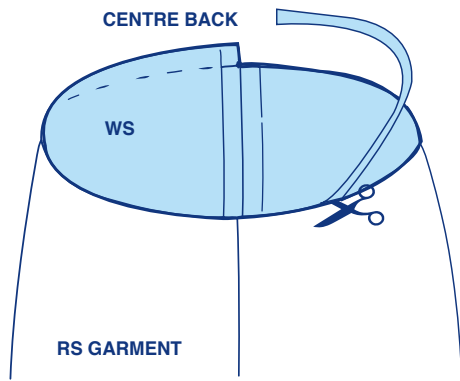


FIGURE 12

Skirts or trousers that swing towards the front (elasticated waist)

If the elasticated waist has a separate casing this can be tackled by following the description in the previous alteration (above). If the garment is simply turned over at the waist then a slightly different procedure must be followed.

- Establish the amount at the back waist that needs to be removed (see figures 8A and 8B).
- Unpick the stitching holding the turn back at the waist and remove the elastic.
- Fold the back in half and pin the side seams and waist together or mark the amount to be removed at the centre back, graduating to nothing at approx 3cms past the side seams on both sides. Trim this away (see figure 12).
- Neaten the newly cut edge.
- Turn the top of the garment onto the inside, wide enough to enclose the elastic plus 1cm seam allowance. Stitch in position, leaving a small opening to enable the elastic to be threaded through. (see figure 13).

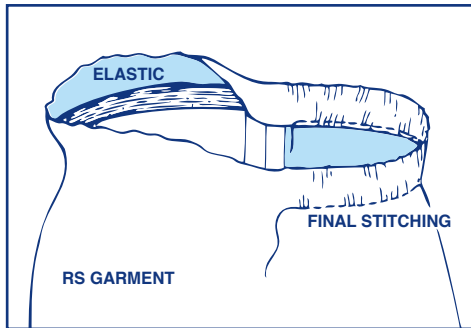


FIGURE 13

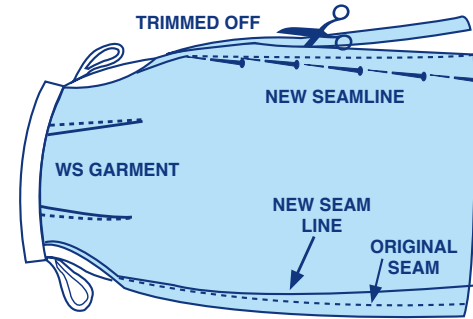


FIGURE 14

Altering a straight skirt that is too wide at the hem.

This requires taking a wide seam allowance at the side seams at the hem, tapering into the existing seamline at the hipline.

- Put the skirt on (right side out) and pin the amount you wish to remove tapering up to the hipline. Note or mark the amount.
- Unpick the hemline and press it flat.
- Using a ruler, draw a line from the hem to blend into the seam at the hipline. Repeat for the other side seam.
- Tack or pin and then stitch following this line.
- Remove the previous row of stitching only up to the hipline, making sure the new row of stitching overlaps sufficiently to ensure a secure seam. Trim, neaten and press both side seams (see figure 14).
- Turn up the hem, following the original line and secure by hand or machine stitching.

Other sources of information and useful contacts

Specialist Alteration Services

Clothing Solutions For Disabled People

Ms. Sandra Hunt
Unit 1 Jubilee Mills
30 North Street
Bradford
BD1 4EW

Tel: 01274 746 739
www.clothingsolutions.org.uk

Dressability

Former Even Swindon School
Hughes Street
Swindon
Wiltshire SN2 2ER

Tel: 01793 485 374

Swindon based charity which specialises in adapting clothing for people with disabilities and the elderly.

Able2Wear Ltd

53 Donaldson Street
Kirkintilloch
East Dunbartonshire
Scotland
G66 1XG

Tel: 0141 775 3738

www.able2wear.co.uk

Adaptive disabled clothing for disabled people and wheelchair users of all ages.

Adaptawear

Moochi House
30 Cole Bank Road
Birmingham
B28 8EY

Tel: 0845 643 9492

www.adaptawear.com

Provide specialist clothing for independent living including front fasten bras (page 26)

Allana Smyth

Unit 11
Eckland Lodge Business Park
Desborough Road
Market Harborough
LE16 8HB

Tel: 01793 485 374

www.allanasmyth.co.uk

Easy access designer clothing range for people with disabilities.

Chums

Chums Ltd,
Unity Grove
Knowsley Business Park
Prescot
L34 9AR

Tel: 0871 911 0601

www.chums.co.uk

Traditional clothing, underwear and products for personal hygiene, mobility, lifestyle and shoes.

Cosyfeet

The Tanyard
Leigh Road
Street
Somerset
BA16 0HR

Tel: 01458 449 035
www.cosyfeet.com

Specialise in extra wide, deep and roomy footwear for men and women with wide, swollen or problem feet. Also offer a range of socks, hosiery and foot comfort products

Damart

Tel: 0871 423 0000
www.damart.co.uk

Mail-order company selling thermal clothing, underwear and fashion and footwear items for women and men.

Designed To Care,

Box 921
6 Slington House
Rankine Road
Basingstoke
RG24 8PH

Tel: 0845 224 9687
www.designedtocare.co.uk

Offer a range of adaptive clothing.

Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)

380/384 Harrow Road
London
W9 2HU

Tel: 0845 130 9177
www.dlf.org.uk

The DLF helps older and disabled people find equipment and clothing solutions that enable them to lead independent lives.

Discretely Different

21 Ferndale Drive
Ratby
Leicester
LE6 0LH

Tel: 0116 238 6338
www.underwearfordisabled.co.uk

For a range of underwear and clothing for disabled people including fastener free bras. Items of clothing can also be customised to suit individual requirements.

Eastex

Tel: 01582 723 131
www.eastex.co.uk

Eden House

Tel:0844 225 9190

www.edenhouseonline.co.uk

For front-fastening bras.

FabafterFifty

www.FabafterFifty.com

An inspirational website and social network for women who are (or want to be) fabulous after 50!

Covers issues around health, well-being, finance, career, and lifestyle.

Hotter Comfort Concept

www.hottershoes.com

0800 083 8490

Specialises in comfortable shoes

Knitandsew.co.uk

21/22 park street

Swansea

SA1 3JD

U.K

Tel: 0845 094 0835

www.knitandsew.co.uk

For transparent bra straps, bra extenders and strap retainers.

Promocan

Helpline

Tel: 01618 342 001

www.promocon.co.uk

Offers a confidential helpline to provide impartial and unbiased information relating to continence products and services.

Rigby & Peller Ltd

Head Office

Unit 5

Portal West Business Centre

6 Portal Way

London

W3 6RU

Tel:0845 076 5545

www.rigbyandpeller.com

Rowland's Clothing

PO Box 3898

Trowbridge

Wiltshire

BA14 4AE

Tel: 0844 855 2355

www.rowlandsclothing.co.uk

Royce Lingerie Ltd

Royce House

Canada Close

Banbury

OX16 2RT

Tel: 01295 265 557

www.royce-lingerie.co.uk

Other leaflets in this range:

- Anorexia nervosa and osteoporosis
- Anti-epileptic drugs and osteoporosis
- Breast cancer treatments and osteoporosis
- Coeliac disease and osteoporosis
- Complementary and alternative therapies and osteoporosis
- Complex regional pain syndrome and osteoporosis
- Drug treatments for osteoporosis
- Exercise and osteoporosis
- Glucocorticoids and osteoporosis
- Healthy bones – facts about food
- Hip protectors and osteoporosis
- Hormone therapy in men and women and osteoporosis
- Living with broken bones (includes information on welfare benefits)
- Osteoarthritis and osteoporosis
- Osteogenesis imperfecta and osteoporosis
- Osteoporosis in children
- Parathyroid disease and osteoporosis
- Percutaneous vertebroplasty and balloon kyphoplasty and osteoporosis
- Pregnancy and osteoporosis
- Scans and tests and osteoporosis
- The contraceptive injection (Depo Provera) and osteoporosis
- Thyroid disease and osteoporosis
- Transsexualism and osteoporosis
- Vibration therapy and osteoporosis

 **0845 130 3076 (General Enquiries)**

 **0845 450 0230 (Helpline)**

 **www.nos.org.uk**

 **Camerton, Bath BA2 0PJ**



President: HRH The Duchess of Cornwall

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