



# Clarren Helmet Therapy

## What is the Clarren helmet?

The Clarren helmet is used to treat your baby's uneven head shape. This helmet therapy has been used at Seattle Children's Hospital since 1979. There are several types of helmet treatments used across the country, but the Clarren helmet is the only one used at Children's. It is a totally passive treatment. This means there is no pressure applied to the head. Instead, we patiently wait as your child's soft, pliable head grows into the molded shape of the helmet. The helmet does not affect the brain's growth.

## What is our daily wearing schedule?

Your child will need to wear the helmet 23½ hours per day. For 30 minutes each day, you can remove the helmet to wash it, clean your baby's hair and let the scalp "air out."

The helmet must be worn continually to capture the head growth when it occurs and restrict the growth from occurring in unwanted directions. Failure to wear the helmet as directed can mean a poor result. If too much growth occurs when the helmet is off, it may not be possible to get the helmet back on.

There is one exception to this strict wearing schedule: If your child gets sick and runs a fever over 101 degrees, you must take the helmet off until the fever is over.

## How long will my child need to wear the helmet?

Helmet treatment lasts until your child's head has grown to the size of the helmet. At that time, the head should have the corrected shape of the helmet. We encourage you to finish treatment. However, if you are happy with the shape before full helmet size is reached, you may stop treatment.

On the average, a Clarren helmet is worn from 3 to 8 months, depending on your child's age at the start of treatment.

### Your Child's Helmet Plan

Child's head circumference is \_\_\_\_\_.

Circumference of the helmet is \_\_\_\_\_.

Estimated length of helmet therapy is \_\_\_\_\_ months.

## How do I care for the helmet?

### Cleaning the helmet

Clean the helmet every day during the 30 minutes your child is out of the helmet. Shampoo your child's hair every day at this time as well.

To clean the helmet, first wipe out the inside with a wet washcloth using only warm water (no soap). Next, wipe the helmet out with a rag dipped in rubbing alcohol (isopropyl alcohol). The alcohol will evaporate rapidly and help to dry the helmet. It also kills bacteria and fungus that are present. Helmets can often develop a foot-like odor. Careful daily cleaning will help this problem.

### Keeping baby cool

Normally, a lot of body heat is released from the head. This heat loss helps regulate body temperature and keeps us cool. Helmets insulate the head and trap in the body heat.

You will find it helpful to dress your child lighter than usual and to use less blankets in order to keep them cool. During warm times of the year, this is especially important.

If your child sweats a lot in the helmet, remove the helmet, dry it and reapply. This may be done a couple times a day. Heat and moisture inside the helmet can cause a heat rash and promote the growth of bacteria and fungus.

## Common problems with the helmet

### Pressure spots

The helmet does not put pressure on the head and, in most cases, is quite loose at first. It may move around considerably at first, but will become tighter as the head grows. Even though the helmet is loose, your child's head can get sore if she lies in the helmet for too long. The weight of the head against the helmet can cause pressure problems. Your child needs to be up often during the day so the helmet will float freely on the head. This can include tummy time, use of a baby swing and so forth.

Check your baby's head daily when the helmet is off for cleaning. If red areas are present and do not fade during the time the helmet is off, you should contact the Orthotics Clinic. An adjustment may be needed if the problem persists.

### Soiled chin strap

- Moisture in the chin straps can be a problem. Cutting teeth and chewing can cause a lot of drooling. The chin straps come off and may be washed in the normal laundry. Use low heat if you want to use the dryer.
- To help with this, you may find it handy to make some cotton sleeves to cover the chin straps, or to cut the toes off of small outgrown socks and use them as strap covers. These can be changed frequently and will reduce the need to wash the chin straps as often.
- You may remove the chin straps when feeding, if you desire. Leave the helmet on.

### To Learn More

- Orthotics and Prosthetics  
206-386-6100
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- [www.seattlechildrens.org](http://www.seattlechildrens.org)

### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.
- For Deaf and hard of hearing callers  
206-987-2280 (TTY)

### Follow-up appointments

Follow-up visits to the Orthotics Clinic can be scheduled on an "as-needed" basis. If there are no problems with the helmet and growth is occurring as expected, you do not need to see us on any schedule. We will be glad to see your child and check their progress at any time during treatment.

Reasons to call us for a visit can include:

- Normal growth adjustments, such as to relieve tightness around the face
- Adjustments to getting the helmet on or off easier (a common condition as the helmet tightens up)
- Relieving any areas of excessive pressure
- Checking the progress of treatment

We are here during the normal work week to answer any questions you may have. If you wish to be seen, we can usually see you within one or two days. In emergency situations after hours, there is always a clinician on call to answer questions.

- For an appointment or in an emergency, call the Orthotics Clinic at 206-386-6100.
- To ask questions of a nurse, call the Craniofacial Clinic at 206-987-2156.

---

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

© 2005, 2006, 2009 Seattle Children's, Seattle, Washington. All rights reserved.

10/09  
PE504