

Binding, Packing, Tucking & Padding

NORFOLK
LGBT+
PROJECT
SUPPORT INFORMATION ADVICE

www.norfolklgbtproject.org.uk

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Binding, Packing, Tucking & Padding

The purpose of this resource is to provide guidance on binding, tucking, packing, and padding and is provided by Norfolk LGBT+ Project with the aim of assisting in making informed decisions.

Body sculpting undergarments are not new, but there is a lack of information focused on those related to gender expression and the increasingly available range of options. An individual interested in these methods might be seeking to reduce gender dysphoria, to use them for cosplay or drag, to better express themselves or to explore different options to increase bodily comfort.

CW: We use some anatomical terminology in this resource for clarity, with the awareness everyone will have different preferences for terminology when referring to their own bodies.

Binding

What is it?

Binding involves wearing tight clothing, underwear or specially designed garments to reduce the appearance of your chest and flatten it out.

Why do people bind? Is it right for me?

Binding is an optional tool for changing your appearance commonly associated with people assigned female at birth. Binding is not limited to the transgender community. People bind for performance, drag, cosplay, to better express themselves or to look a certain way. Only you know what's best for you regarding your comfort and gender expression, and if unsure you can try things out in a pressure-free environment at home. It is a personal choice whether you bind and how often: remember that all chests come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, regardless of gender.

What should I use?

This will depend on the size of your chest and how flat you want to appear. You might want to try a couple of options if budget allows. It is important when it comes to hygiene to have 2-3 options, especially when one is in the wash! A binder usually looks like a tank top or half a tank top: some have straps some don't, some you pull over the head, some use clasps, zips, or Velcro. Over-the-head fits that are tight might be hard to put on alone, so you might need help the first time you try one.

There is a difference between binders that are made for one-off use (drag/cosplay/dressing up) and those designed for long-term use, be sure you are buying the right type. Price and the website you are purchasing from are often the indications you need for this if it's unclear by product description.



Binder Half Tank

Pros

- Common form of binder for long-term wear.
- Can be made to measure.
- Designed specifically for the purpose of binding.
- Can accumulate less sweat than a full tank binder.
- Effective compression.

Cons

- Straps can show under some outfits.
- Can be hard to put on if an over the head fit.



Binder Full Tank

Pros

- Common form of binder for long-term wear.
- Full tank binders are designed to fit like a tank top but with the added element of compression for the stomach and hips.
- Offers added full body sculpting.
- Can be made to measure.
- Designed specifically for the purpose of binding.
- Effective compression.

Cons

- Can roll up which can be uncomfortable. You may prefer a different type of binder if you have sensory concerns. To avoid this, wear higher waisted trousers belted to tuck into.
- Can accumulate more sweat than a half tank.
- Straps can show under some outfits.
- Can be hard to put on if over the head fit.

Binding

What should I avoid?

Tapes, duct tape, cling film, tights or elastic bandages are unsuitable for binding. While some medical tapes may be labelled 'safe to use on skin' they are not designed for compression. With any medical tape there is a possibility of skin damage such as rashes and peeling, and many are unsuitable for sensitive skin.

Most importantly, it is easy to accidentally bind too tight with tape, which can cause accidental injury. You should never be struggling for or short of breath whilst going about your day from binding. Anything you bind with needs to be possible to remove without causing you harm for extreme medical emergencies. If these measures have temporary appeal, consider the risks involved and your long-term goals: it is worth the investment in your health to bind safely and with properly designed binders.

How do I know if it fits well?

To determine the size you need, accurately measure your chest size. Binders are already designed to be very tight at their correct size so don't get one smaller than you need. For the best possible fit, you can have a custom binder made to measure. If that's not possible, use your measurements to find the closest possible fit through a reputable, trans-owned company (e.g., GC2B, Spectrum Outfitters), which are preferable only because they are specifically designed for binding purposes and therefore often have a better fit than those designed for cisgender male chests.



Sports Compression Vest

Pros

- Breathable materials designed for activewear.
- Can work well for smaller chests.
- Offer full body sculpting.
- Can sometimes be suitable for sports if enough give in the fit, but still take breaks.
- Effective compression.

Cons

- Can accumulate more sweat.
- Straps can show under some outfits.
- Compression may not be suited for 'male chest sculpting' as already designed for cisgender male chests, not designed with trans bodies in mind.



Wrap around

Pros

- Easy to put on.
- Effective compression.
- Can be worn under all outfits without straps showing.
- Suitable for smaller chests.

Cons

- No straps can lead to slipping down or needing to readjust.

Binding

You should be able to fit two fingers down the side of the binder when on without struggling. If you find it harder to breathe, if your skin is affected or you are in any kind of pain at all, it's too tight. Binding can involve discomfort as you get used to it, but it should never be directly painful. When wearing your binder, your breathing should be regular, and nothing should hurt. Soreness from frequent use can occur. Do take breaks. Wear a sports bra with layered, loose clothing for a day off if experiencing high levels of dysphoria.

Are there any negative health impacts relating to binding?

You can bind safely and sensibly, or you can bind too tight for too long: if you're not binding safely there are risks attached. If you have asthma or other conditions associated with shortness of breath, binding can make these worse. They can also cause (over several years of continued use) a loss of elasticity to the chest.

Common problems include:

- A sore back or shoulders.
- Acne or skin irritation.
- Uncomfortable sweating.
- Reduced skin elasticity.



Sports Bra

Pros

- Ideal as a secondary option for sports and binding breaks, can pair with oversized wear.
- Tight fitting with plenty of stretch Lycra content paired with a secondary tight tank top can give shape.
- There are good affordable options with compression elements.
- Can be worn for longer periods of time.

Cons

- Not effective compression.
- Does not offer the sculpting of a binder.
- Can be harder for those experiencing dysphoria to wear – but still important for your body to take breaks.

How do I make sure I am binding safely?

- Wear your binder for a maximum of 8 hours a day.
- Give your body regular breaks from compression.
- Don't sleep or work out in your binder.
- Exercise and stretch out your back and shoulders to ease soreness.
- Stop binding if you think your binder is too tight or causing you pain.
- Keep your binder clean with regular washes to reduce skin problems.
- Have a couple of options if you bind daily.

Packing

What is it?

Packing is the creation of a penis or the appearance of a penis with a phallic object. A packer can range from simple foam inserts and DIY-options like rolled socks, to hyper-realistic silicone options. They vary hugely when it comes to materials, price-ranges and appearance. Whether you pack or not is a very personal choice, there is no right or wrong, just what feels right for you.

How do I know if it is right for me?

Some people find it can give them a confidence boost, ease dysphoria or discomfort or might just be useful for certain occasions, performances, or events. You might find you pack in some environments and not others. Others might find that packing can increase their dysphoria rather than ease it, because of its temporary nature. The best way to find out if it's right for you is to try it out, from the comfort of your home first and see how it makes you feel. A packer can be an expensive investment, but if you want to try it out the easiest DIY option is rolled, clean socks. Starting with something simple can help you decide if it is right for you before committing to further options.

When it comes to choosing a packer that suits your needs, consider:

- How long you plan on wearing it for
- The importance of overall appearance and size
- Whether you need to stand to urinate with it
- Budget
- Type of material and potential allergies
- How you secure the packer in place

What are my options?

Foam Inserts

For those not concerned with phallic appearance, but prefer a visible bulge, a foam insert can work. Lightweight and easy to use, they are often used combined with packing underwear to keep a layer of cloth between the foam and your body. Follow individual care instructions.

Cloth Packers

Custom-made or standard, there are quite a few cloth options that combine cloth and woven materials sewn into phallic appearance. These are great for anyone with sensitive skin or allergies and can be more durable than some of the skin-feel options. They are also easy to attach with pins rather than pouches, avoiding the additional cost of specialist underwear.

STP

Stand-to-Pee options allow the wearer to pee standing up. Learning to use an STP will take practice and might be frustrating at first, so if it's your first STP device, start in the shower. They come in a variety of options from simple plastic aids to voiding standing up, to lightweight, leak-resistant silicone options designed for realistic appearance and ease of use. Follow care instructions to keep these clean and hygienic.

Prosthetics

Prosthetic packers are some of the most advanced on the market and many have prices to match the high levels of detail they can come with. If having a realistic penis is important a customisable option might suit you, especially if it's for everyday use. These come with many textural options, skin tone shades, foreskin lengths, testicle sizes (some movable) and optional hair. There are some great mid-range prosthetic options out there with silicone usually being the most affordable.

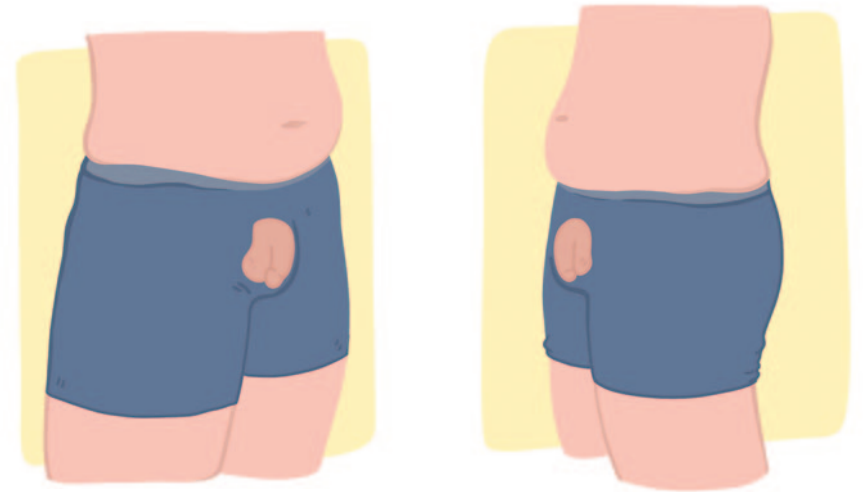
Packing

How do I make sure it fits my underwear?

Some packers require specialist underwear that comes with a packing pouch inserted. Others might need jockstraps or harnesses. When you buy your packer, make a note of the size of the hole that is required to fit the phallic packer into. A few specialist companies make 'packing pouches' which makes sure there is a layer of material between the packer and skin, making it easier to keep it clean, and these can be a great low-cost option that allow you to use the underwear you already have – just attach the pouch to the underwear.

Your options for securing your packer include:

- Packing pouches – can be attached to existing underwear
- Underwear with built-in dedicated pouches for packers
- Jockstraps
- Packing harnesses – with straps that fit under your underwear



Are there any negative health impacts relating to packing?

- Relatively few, but you may encounter chafing related to ill-fitting harnesses or packing materials. Ensure your skin is dry and clean. If persistent, try a method of packing to make sure there is no direct skin contact and cloth layers in between, such as a packing pouch or specialist underwear.
- UTI's associated with STP and packing devices that are not kept clean or interact badly with skin. Ensure good hygiene is kept and wash after use, making sure you allow the device to dry completely and do not wear it when there is any residual moisture.
- Avoid allergies by ensuring your packing device is made of materials safe to use with your skin e.g. avoid latex products if allergic to latex.

Tucking

What is it?

Concealing or flattening the prominence of external genitalia by ‘tucking’ them so they are not visible. A tuck will sit either between the buttocks or up towards the inguinal canal (a part of the groin where testes sit before birth.)

Why do people tuck? Is it right for me?

Tucking is an optional tool for changing your gender expression. It’s commonly associated with helping women of trans experience and non-binary individuals assigned male at birth feel more comfortable, and common within both drag and cosplay. Some people find it can help to ease gender dysphoria and raise their confidence levels. Only you know what’s best for you regarding your comfort and gender expression and it is a personal choice whether or not you tuck and how often.

What should I use?

A common choice is a gaff: specialist compression underwear designed specifically to make tucking easier, though they can be worn with or without tucking. Alternative options include safe-for-skin medical tape and tight underwear (tapes should always be used with caution and checked when it comes to sensitive skin). Some people layer one pair of underwear to tuck, another pair over the top for a more secure tuck. The other option to keep a tuck secure is medical tape. If you use this, ensure you have shaved and won’t be removing hairs with the tape.

Tucking with underwear or a specially designed gaff can be much easier and convenient for using the bathroom if you need to resecure your tuck throughout the day. Take time to practice until you feel comfortable and take breaks by wearing loose fitted clothing when needed.

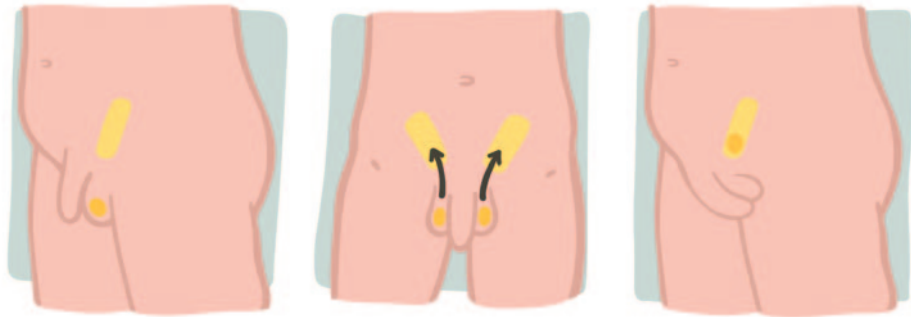
What should I avoid?

Tucking with unsuitable tapes such as duct tape. Avoid anything that can cause skin damage or irritation. When it comes to picking a tape if this is your preferred method, choose something hypoallergenic and specifically designed for use on the skin. You might find wrapping the genitals in a small piece of material and taping directly onto cloth helps avoid irritation for sensitive skin. When it comes to removing the tape, it can help to use a warm water soak to make sure it peels off safely.

Are there any negative health impacts associated with tucking?

Whilst there is no evidence prolonged tucking causes fertility problems, there is a research gap in this area. Tucking might be uncomfortable, but it should not be constantly painful. If you find you are in any pain from tucking, your body needs you to take a break, and make sure you consult your GP if pain is persistent. You may want to consider switching to a different method. There are relatively few negative health associations for careful tucking with breaks.

Tucking



How do I make sure I am tucking safely?

- Don't tuck for too long, take breaks and wear loose fitting clothing on days you choose to take a break from tucking.
- After untucking, always check for sore skin or rashes and see your GP if you encounter any inflammation, unhealed rashes, or other genital complaints.
- Drink water as you would regularly throughout the day, don't limit it to avoid the bathroom and having to re-tuck, as this can contribute to dehydration or UTI risk.
- To avoid chafing, soreness and rashes take regular breaks and keep the area clean and dry – a soft powder like talc can help keep skin dry.
- A warm water soak can help remove tape gently.

Padding

What is it?

Padding refers to a number of garments and methods of creating a body shape and silhouette that is most comfortable and desirable for you. It might mean increasing the size of hips, bum, thighs or breasts for example. Some view it as a safer and cheaper version of silicone injections and implants.

How do I know if it is right for me?

Lots of people use padding for a variety of different reasons. It is something you can try at home first and see how it feels. Individuals padding might want to fit clothing in a different way, help increase bodily comfort, ease dysphoria, or better express gender. They can also be used post or pre-surgery to retain or gain desired shape and form, for example after a mastectomy to retain even breast appearance or pre-surgery if undergoing chest enhancement. They are also commonly used in the arts as part of performance.

What are my options?

There are a number of products on the market that can help with padding, including but not limited to:

Padded pants

These can help body contour the hips or bum.

Breast forms

These are often silicone or silicone gel based, will be either able to be stuck to the body or placed in a bra and come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Consider the appearance that is important to you and the length of time you will have them on for when looking at options.

Padding

Padded bras

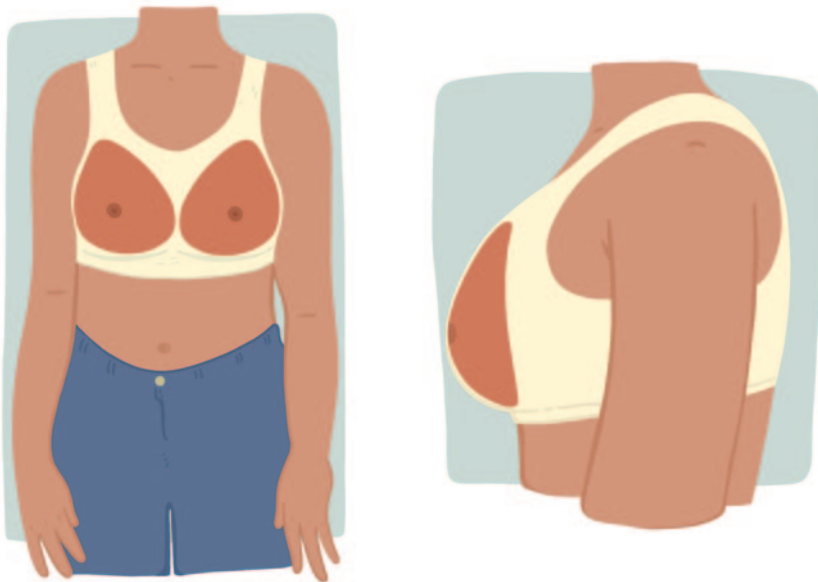
These can help create larger breasts, they might be desirable if you are taking hormones but have not got to the stage you would like with your breast tissue.

Shapewear

Underwear designed to give certain body shapes. There are now some great options by independent makers and designers that are created specifically for trans bodies.

When it comes to padding, always follow individual care instructions, check price and materials for any skin allergens and quality assurance.

Bras with pockets for breast forms



Gender Identity Support Norfolk and Waveney

Offering one-to-one advice, information and support to transgender, non-binary individuals and those questioning their gender identity.


This is open to children, young people and adults in Norfolk and Waveney. This can be by self-referral or referral from professionals.

Our aim is to make this support as open and welcoming as possible, therefore our one-to-one support can be accessed via face-to-face, email, phone, WhatsApp or via a video call.

Individuals are also welcome to join our monthly drop in groups.

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Registered Charity No. 1129770 • September 2022