Policy Statements
A. Skin care needs for all patients with cervical collars (c-collars) will be addressed through assessment of skin and risk factors for potential breakdown in skin integrity.
B. Assessments will be performed on admission and every 12 hours throughout the hospital stay. Preventative and therapeutic interventions will be implemented based on these assessments.
C. Patients requiring c-collar immobilization for more than 24 hours will have their field collar changed to an inpatient cervical collar.
D. Cervical collars are ordered in the electronic medical record (EMR) to ensure that only approved products are in use. The services that order c-collars are trauma, neurosurgery and orthopedics.

Purpose
A. To provide immobilization, stabilization and/or support of the head and neck for patients requiring a c-collar.
B. To provide guidelines for placing, cleaning and maintaining cervical collar.
C. To maintain skin integrity.

Procedure
A. Assessment
   1. Observe patient in collar for appropriate fit.
      a. A properly fitted collar should extend from the mandible to the sternal notch.
      b. The tracheostomy hole and the posterior vent hole should be midline.
      c. The chin piece should be flush with the edge of the chin.
   2. Assess occiput, neck, chin, ears, shoulders and superior aspect of scapula for any breakdown.
      a. If necessary (patient requiring c-collar immobilization for more than 24 hours) fit patient using sizing card which is available in the package with the cervical collar (see Attachment I).
B. Plan
   1. Explain procedure to patient
   2. Assemble the following equipment:
      a. Cervical collar on patient or from the supply room or order in the EMR if not available on the division.
      b. Soap, washcloth and towels
      c. Extra universal pads (provided with collar)
      d. Appropriate assistive personnel as needed
C. Implementation
   1. The registered nurse is responsible for maintaining cervical alignment and assuring the neck is stabilized and free of breakdown.
   2. Instruct the patient not to move their head or neck. Assess movement in the patient’s extremities (i.e., Wiggle your fingers and toes, etc.), and assess the need for sedation.
3. Position the patient supine with arms to the side with neck in proper alignment. Utilize two persons to control patient movement, one to hold the patient’s head in a neutral position with the chin straight and the second to fit the collar as needed, clean and assess the skin.

4. When fitting the collar, place the sizing guide against the side of the head with the color-coded section facing outward. The bottom of the sizing card should be resting at the tip of the trapezius muscle. Draw an imaginary line from the chin to the sizing card and select the appropriate color-coded size. If the size is between two sizes, choose the smaller of the two sizes.

5. Obtain the proper size collar and pre-form it by rolling up the back panel (like a hand towel) and rolling the front panel sides inward and finish by flexing the flex tabs located on both panels.

6. Slide the back of the collar behind the patients’ neck and shoulder by pushing down on the mattress and centering the collar between the scapulae. Hold the front of the collar under the chin in the “choking position” and rotate the collar ends up against the neck and toward the ear. When correctly positioned tighten the velcro straps by pulling steadily and firmly one at a time.

7. If necessary, place protective padding along the bony prominences to provide an extra cushion from the collar.

8. Assess for appropriate fit. **KEY POINT:** A properly fitted collar extends from the mandible to the sternal notch. The tracheostomy hole and the posterior vent hole should be midline. The chin piece should be flush with the edge of the chin. If the chin hangs out over the chin piece then the next larger size collar should be applied.

9. Foam pads should extend beyond plastic at all points so that no plastic touches the skin.

10. Cleanse the plastic parts of the collar and replace soiled foam pads with daily bath or more frequently as needed.

11. For routine cleansing follow steps, 1, 2 and 3 from above.
   a. Release the velcro straps and remove the front part of the collar.
   b. Remove foam pads and replace as needed.
   c. Clean hard plastic pieces of collar.
   d. Observe the neck and skin for any breakdowns or irritation.

   **KEY POINT:** For any noted breakdown in skin, apply topical agent and/or dressing per Wound Care Team recommendations or MD order and document the breakdown in the electronic medical record.
   e. Wash the neck with mild soap and water and dry thoroughly.
   f. Replace the collar front and fasten the Velcro straps.

12. Supporting the neck, logroll the patient to the side position.
   a. Remove the back of the collar, replace any pads as needed and clean the neck with mild soap and water and dry thoroughly.
   b. Replace the back of the collar and secure the Velcro straps.
   c. Logroll the patient back to the supine position and assess the collar for proper fit.

**KEY POINT:** It is necessary to utilize assistive personnel to maintain neck alignment.

13. Wash the foam pads in mild soap and water and allow to air dry so they may be reused.

14. Reassess the movement in the extremities after the collar is reapplied.

15. Assistance with fitting the collar and maintenance may be obtained by calling the Surgical Intensive Care Unit (extension 2-4060) or the Trauma Floor (extension 2-4052).

16. See Attachment for Instruction Sheet.

D. Documentation
1. Movement of extremities before and after c-collar care of fitting.
2. Proper alignment and fit of c-collar.
3. Assessment of skin and treatments.
Resources/References
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Approval
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