

**Division of Pediatric Orthopaedics**

**Sanjeev Sabharwal, MD**

**Flo Edobor-Osula, MD**

**Emily McClemens, PA-C Michele Gilliland, PA-C**

**Phone: (973) 972-0246**

**PEDSORTHO@NJMS.RUTGERS.EDU**

**DEVELOPMENTAL DYSPLASIA OF THE HIP (DDH)**

**What is developmental dysplasia of the hip (DDH)?**

The hip has two major parts: a cup shaped socket (acetabulum) and the ball-shaped upper end of the thighbone (femur). DDH means the ball-shaped end of the thighbone (femur) is either completely, or partially, out of the cup-shaped socket (acetabulum).

**Developmental dysplasia of the hip:**

- May occur just before or following birth.
- Has no specific cause.
- Happens more often in girls and first-born children.
- Most often involves the left hip.
- May be affected by such things as
  - loose hip ligaments.
  - a breech birth.
  - the position of the infant in the womb.
  - family history of DDH.

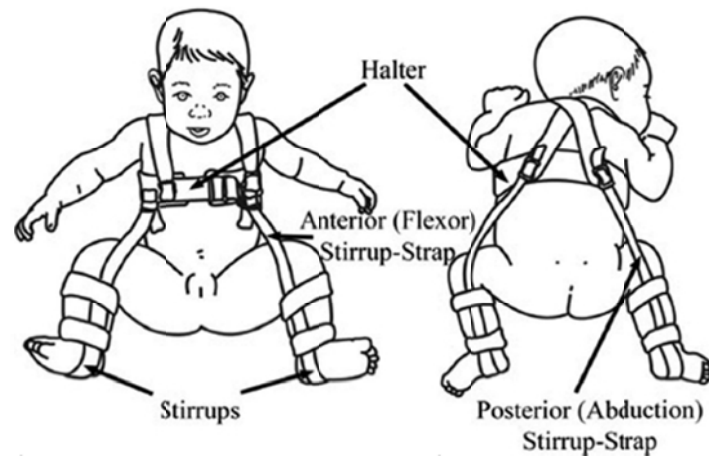
**How is DDH diagnosed and treated?**

DDH is diagnosed by a physical exam and/or ultrasound. It is generally treated by applying a Pavlik harness in infants six months of age or younger.

**What is a Pavlik harness?**

A Pavlik harness is a series of cotton straps used to treat DDH. The harness keeps the hips in the correct position, allowing the hip sockets to develop properly. Only the M.D. or the orthopedic physician assistant adjusts the harness during the treatment time. It is very important that the harness stays on 24 hours each day

because this is the only way correction of the hips can be obtained. The harness is not painful for your baby to wear. It will allow your baby to have some movement and eventually he/she will learn to roll over and possibly crawl while in it.



### What do I do when my child is in the harness?

- Never remove the harness or change the position of the straps if your child is to be in the harness 24 hours a day. Removing the harness may cause the hip to dislocate (come out of the hip socket).
- The harness may be removed for bathing with those infants who are in the harness for 23 hours a day.
- You will be able to bathe your child at home by giving sponge baths.
- The doctor marks the position of the harness straps with an ink pen after the harness is applied. This will allow you to check for proper strap position.
- Protect the harness from getting dirty by using a towel or bib at feeding time. Some soiling can be expected from feeding and diaper changes. If the harness gets very dirty, a new one may be put on at the clinic. The dirty harness will be given to you so it can be washed in Ivory soap and air-dried. Bring the clean harness to the next clinic visit so that it can be changed if needed. Remember that the harness must ALWAYS remain on your child.
- The harness is worn next to the skin. Clothing is worn OVER the harness, even undershirts and socks. Clothing that fits loose is best. (The harness may go over the undershirt if it is worn for 23 hours a day.)
- Every infant must travel in a car seat. A newborn in a Pavlik harness can easily fit into a car seat. At 2 to 3 months of age, the car seat may become too small. Ask your child's MD or physician assistant about special car seats.

- Your baby may be held in any comfortable position that allows the baby's legs to remain in place in the harness.

### **How do I care for my child's skin?**

- Keep the skin clean and dry.
- Check the skin under and around the harness straps every time you change a diaper.

Also check the folds of the thighs for redness and irritation.

- Do NOT put powder or lotion or creams to the skin under or around the straps or skin because they tend to keep the skin too moist and may eventually lead to irritation.
- Use an undershirt and diaper beneath the harness to protect the baby's torso.
- A long pair of socks that extend to the knees or thighs will protect the legs and feet.
- In the beginning, it will be easier to bathe your baby by taking the harness off one section at a time. Remove a shoulder strap, bathe that area, then replace the strap and move to the next shoulder and so on.

### **How do I diaper my child in the harness?**

- It is important to make sure the straps of the harness are on the outside of the diaper to prevent soiling.
- When diapering, place the diaper underneath the baby's bottom and tuck each side of it under each of the back straps. Then bring the front of the diaper up through the legs and place each corner under the front straps. Now fasten the diaper.

### **How do I cloth my child in the harness?**

- If you have a girl, dresses fit very comfortably over the harness.
- If you have a boy, it may be a little more difficult and will depend on what season it is.
- Keep in mind that the baby's comfort is much more important than style.
- You may have to buy larger clothing to fit over the harness.
- Higher socks, preferably cotton, which go over or past the knees will prevent chafing of the legs.

### **How do I hold and position my child in the harness?**

- Your child may be positioned on their back or stomach, but not on their side.
- Hold your child in a position which allows the legs to remain open, not pushed together.
- Make sure the baby's legs are maintained in an open position when wrapping them in blankets.
- Avoid swaddling your child's lower body. The upper body can still be swaddled.

***ALERT:*** Call your child's doctor, PA or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child:

- Has their legs or feet come out of the harness.
- Has a strap that becomes too tight or causes a sore or open area on the skin.
- Seems to be in pain or uncomfortable.
- Has skin folds that become irritated.
- Has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.