

# Binding: The Basics

Binding is the process of using garments to compress the chest\* to produce a flatter appearance. People of many different gender identities bind for a lot of different reasons, and many choose not to. The decision is a personal one and this guide will help you learn how to safely bind if you decide to!

## Things to know beforehand!

- Many people choose to use a binder, a garment specifically designed to compress the chest comfortably and safely, when binding, but this isn't necessary!
- Some people will wear a sports bra or an athletic compression shirt to give the appearance of a flatter chest without a binder. Look for garments made from Spandex or Lycra for the best compression.
- Other people will simply layer shirts (tightest fitting on the bottom, getting looser with each layer, often ending with a button down). If this feels and looks good to you, great! If not, it might be time to try a binder.
- It's very important to find the right size, we recommend measuring yourself. If you fall between sizes, most people are more comfortable going a size up.

Regardless of the way you bind, never bind for more than 8 hours at a time! This can be dangerous.

## Is it safe? Are there any risks?

Unfortunately, we don't have much research on the effects of binding, but here's what we do know:

- **Never** bind while sleeping or for more than 8 hours at a time. Binding without breaks can lead to breathing problems, back pain, skin irritation, and rib damage. It's important to take breaks!
- **Never** use duct tape or ace bandages to bind! These make it harder to breathe and move and are more likely to damage your skin.
- Binders can cause skin irritation and infections, especially if you're sweating a lot. Some people wear a light shirt or use Gold Bond powder under their binder to protect their skin. It's also important to wash your binder regularly!
- Tighter doesn't necessarily mean better! If you're having pain, you might need a different size or style.

\*many different words can be used to describe these body parts!

# Binding: The Specifics

**Where to get a binder:** Many companies sell binders specifically for gender diverse people online, including Underworks, G2CB, and FTM Essentials. For free or low-cost binders, check The Binder Project, Gender Gear, Point of Pride, MORF Exchange, and many other online options. Also, check #bindergiveaway on social media for giveaways!

## Choosing a style

**Long:** can roll up, but is long enough to be tucked in;  
may slim the tummy; can be hot and restrictive

**Short:** can also roll up, but usually can't be tucked;  
not as hot or restrictive

**Sports bra:** best for people who tend to get hot;  
least restrictive; may not be as flattening

## Measuring yourself

1. Measure the biggest part of your chest (over the nipples\*)
2. Measure just under the breast\*, at the breast\* crease
3. Add the numbers together
4. Divide by two for your chest size

## Putting the binder on

- Some are a vest with zippers or Velcro
- Some are pulled over the head; others can be pulled up:
  1. Step into the binder with it inside out and upside down; and then pull up to your waist.
  2. Pull the top of the binder to your shoulders and place arms in sleeves.
- You may need to reposition: Place your hand at the neck and gently push each breast\* down and out.
- Your chest may look bigger when you're looking down at it, so check in a mirror to see how it looks!

\*many different words can be used to describe these body parts!

### Sources:

"Binding 101: Brands, Care Tips, and Health." (2014). Autostraddle.

"Binding 101: Tips to Bind Your Chest Safely." Point 5cc.

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