



Guide to chest binding

GENDER EUPHORIA
Spectrum 
Outfitters

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What is Dysphoria?

Gender dysphoria is a term used to describe the distress or discomfort that some individuals may experience when their gender identity does not align with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Here are some key points to help you understand gender dysphoria, if you are reading this on behalf of your friend, child, or for yourself:

1. It's Not a Choice: Gender dysphoria is not a choice or something that can be controlled. It is a natural and valid part of the persons experience.

2. Physical and Emotional Aspects:

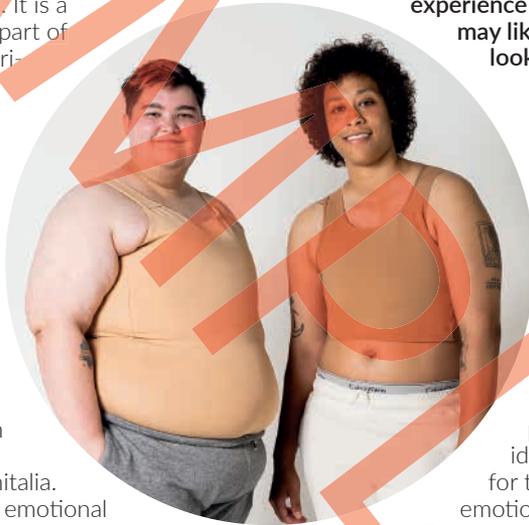
Gender dysphoria can manifest in different ways. Some people may experience physical discomfort with their bodies, such as distress about their chest or genitalia. Others may have emotional distress related to societal expectations, discrimination, or feeling misunderstood.

3. It Varies from Person to Person: The intensity and nature of gender dysphoria can vary greatly from person to person. What causes distress in one transgender individual may not affect another in the same way. Not everyone who identifies as transgender experiences dysphoria!

4. Treatment Options: It's important to note that there are various ways to address and alleviate gender dysphoria. These may include social transitioning

(using a different name, pronouns, and presenting themselves in a different way. Perhaps with a binder!), medical interventions like hormone therapy or surgery (if appropriate and desired), and psychological support, such as therapy, counseling, or confiding in supportive close friends and family.

Chest binders are non-surgical and minimally invasive. If you experience chest dysphoria, binders can provide immediate relief. Some people don't experience dysphoria but may like the way they look with a binder.



5. Support Is Critical: The most important thing you can do as a parent, friend, or ally is to provide unconditional love and support.

Accepting and validating this person's gender identity is crucial for their mental and emotional well-being.

This includes accepting yourself!

6. Consult Professionals: It's advisable to seek guidance from healthcare professionals who are experienced in transgender healthcare. They can provide information about the best approaches for your specific needs.

7. Respect Privacy: While it's important to support the person experiencing dysphoria, it's also essential to respect their privacy. They may choose to disclose their gender identity and experiences at their own pace.



The History of Binding



Chest binding, the practice of compressing one's chest to create a flatter and more masculine or gender-neutral appearance, has a long history deeply intertwined with transgender, gender-nonconforming, and non-binary communities. While it's difficult to pinpoint the exact origins of chest binding, it has been a significant aspect of gender expression for many centuries.

Early History:

- 1. Cross-Dressing in Theater:** In various historical contexts, actors and performers have engaged in chest binding as part of cross-dressing on stage. This practice dates back to ancient Greece and was prevalent in Shakespearean theater as well.
- 2. Chinese Traditional Dress:** A Hezi (pictured below) is an ancient corset-like garment used as both an undergarment and a decorative over garment accessory. To compress the chest for the style of clothing that was fashionable at the time. They were worn in the Tang dynasty which ruled from 618-907CE.
- 3. Flapper Fashion:** In the 1920's when Flapper style dresses were popularised, women would wear bandeau style undergarments to reduce the appearance of their chests, so that the silhouette of the straight dresses looked right.
- 3. Transgender History:** Chest binding has been a crucial tool for transgender individuals throughout history. In the 18th and 19th centuries, people assigned female at birth who wanted to live as men would often use tight corsets or bandages to flatten their chests. One famous transgender individual during this period was Doctor Alan Hart, (pictured above) who was born in 1890. He used X-Rays to detect tuberculosis, which saved thousands of lives.

20th Century:

1. **Medical Approaches:** In the early 20th century, some transgender individuals began exploring medical options for gender-affirming procedures, including mastectomies (breast removal). However, these procedures were considered risky at the time and unavailable to many.

2. **DIY Methods:** With the limited availability of gender-affirming surgeries and the emergence of transgender communities, DIY chest binding became more common. People used materials like Ace bandages, duct tape, or multiple layers of clothing to achieve a flatter chest.

Please do not try DIY methods! We will explain about safety shortly, we just felt it was important to explain the history and the reasons that modern binders were developed.

Late 20th Century to Present:

1. **Advancements in Binding Materials:** The late 20th century saw the development of safer and more effective binding materials. Companies started producing purpose-made binders specifically designed for chest compression. These binders are typically made of breathable and stretchy materials, reducing health risks associated with older methods.

2. **Online Communities and Information:** The internet and social media have played a significant role in spreading information about safe binding practices. Online forums and communities provide guidance on binding methods, safer materials, and tips for avoiding potential health issues. In addition to this booklet we have extensive information on our website and social media.

3. **Increased Visibility:** As transgender and non-binary individuals gain more visibility and acceptance in society, chest binding has become a recognised

aspect of gender expression. Celebrities, activists, and public figures have openly discussed their experiences with binding, helping to reduce stigma and raise awareness.

Challenges and Health Considerations:

While chest binding is an essential tool for many transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals, it's crucial to note that **improper** binding practices can lead to health issues. These can include restricted breathing, skin irritation, bruising, and even long-term damage to the ribcage or breast tissue. It's important for those who bind their chests to prioritise safety, which we will go over in this booklet.

In summary, chest binding has a rich and complex history closely connected to the experiences of transgender, gender-nonconforming, non-binary, and cisgender people. As societal understanding of gender diversity continues to evolve, so too will the practices and materials associated with chest binding, with a focus on promoting safety, inclusivity, and self-expression.



Our Binders are the best for YOU

How it began

Our binders were developed by Jack who is a trans man and wore binders for 4 years daily. At the beginning of his transition, when he knew nothing about binders or binding safely, he received an injury from wearing a poorly designed binder. He had a large chest and the garment was not designed to stretch. He bought the garment as an experiment to see if he liked how he looked with a more "masculine" chest. When breathing his ribs were not able to expand properly and within hours he developed pain in his right side, which can still be felt at times today.

This inspired Jack to make sure this couldn't happen to other people like him and he set out to invent the safest, most comfortable option possible. He also wanted to educate the people he helped in the best practices to keep them feeling good.

Jack's new binders were developed in association with the contour fashion (underwear and swimwear design) department at DeMontfort University. With their expertise he was able to use the best materials available for their function.

The products would be low profile, more durable, environmentally friendly, with superior compression to the alternatives. All while greatly reducing the pressure on the wearer for a safe and comfortable experience.

Unlike alternative binder brands, our products are designed to compress from the back which should put less pressure on your body than other binders.



Building a brand

It wasn't just the safety and function of the binder that Jack wanted to improve on. At that time binders weren't readily available in the UK. Ordering from America meant waiting for at least 6 weeks for delivery, and expensive customs fees on arrival.

If a company existed in the UK that could deliver a binder under a week, with discreet postage, no customs fees, and options for returns, it would be a lifeline for people struggling with dysphoria in the UK and Europe.

Spectrum Outfitters was founded in 2017. There was a lot of interest online and a preorder waiting list. The first binders were delivered to customers in February 2018.

Materials

The main fabric of our binders (the coloured outer) is one of the highest performing fabrics in the world. It was used in the Olympic uniforms worn by British athletes at the London Olympics, designed by Stella McCartney. It is made using recycled ocean plastics that are pulled from the sea bed. This fabric is thinner and more breathable than other binder brands, while maintaining its shape and strength for longer. Your binder will feel cooler, perform better and last longer.

The front inside panel, which will directly touch your chest, is 100% cotton. The material is traditionally used in corsets so it is more than up for the task. This panel will be soft on your skin, and it won't stretch. This allows it to hold your chest flat, and to stay that way for a long time with frequent use.

The inner back panel is made using a breathable performance mesh. This keeps you cool, and is actually where the compression comes from. **We believe that our binders put less pressure on your body than other options which compress you on all sides.**

Designed for you, by people like you

Feedback was taken from real customers to improve the design even further to fit better for the full range of body types. We have always offered binders



with fewer seams than other brands and a more sensory friendly design.

We improved the arm holes on our binders to prevent them from digging in and to keep your chest in at the sides. We also improved the neckline to allow it to be less visible under other clothing.

We currently stock sizes between XXS-7XL in a wide variety of colours. We have short crop style binders and full length binders available. We are also continuously developing further styles to cater to your needs.

Many of our customers with a large chest are amazed by the results. So rest assured that our binders will reduce the appearance of your chest regardless of your measurements!

These guidelines are incredibly important for anyone who is considering or currently practicing chest binding. Safety should always be the top priority when engaging in this practice. Here's a breakdown of the key points to keep in mind:

1. Proper Binders: Using proper chest binders is crucial for safety and comfort. Avoid using methods like duct tape, bandages, or multiple compression garments, as they can restrict your ribcage and lead to health issues. Cheap binders from online marketplaces may not be designed with your safety and comfort in mind.

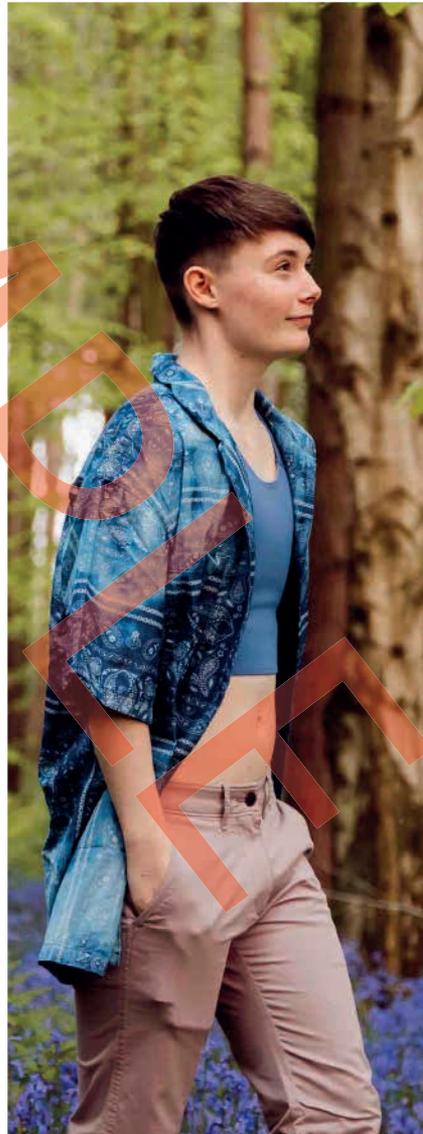
2. Wearing the Right Size Binder: Measure yourself accurately to ensure you're wearing the correct size binder. Sizing information is in the next section, and you can always message us for advice. Wearing a smaller binder might not improve your appearance but can harm your ribs, which should not be compressed. Never double bind, (wear more than one compression layer) as it can cause pain and discomfort.

3. Monitoring Your Health: Pay attention to any signs of discomfort while binding. If you experience any pain at all, light-headedness, heartburn, or shortness of breath, stop wearing the binder immediately and consult with a doctor. None of these symptoms should occur with a safe and correctly sized binder.

4. Rib Compression: The goal of chest binding is to compress soft tissue without compressing the ribs. Using a binder that is too small can end up compressing your ribs, leading to adverse health effects.

5. Binding While Exercising: If you choose to wear a binder while exercising, consider sizing up to allow more room for movement and to reduce pressure on your chest. Pay close attention to your breathing and listen to your body.

Staying Safe in a Binder





6. **Overheating:** Wearing a binder can lead to overheating, especially in warm climates. Wear breathable clothing, find shade, and stay hydrated. Take breaks from binding when necessary to prevent overheating.

7. **Body Changes:** Your body can change over time due to factors like weight fluctuations or hormone therapy. Measure yourself periodically to ensure your binder still fits correctly.

8. **Wearing a Binder for Too Long:** It's recommended that individuals over 18 limit binding to no more than 8 hours a day. Remove your binder as soon as possible if you experience discomfort, and take short breaks to stretch. Never sleep in a binder, as it can be dangerous. For those under 18, binding should be limited to 6 hours.

9. **Age:** Rib growth continues until around ages 18 to 25, so it's important to consider this when binding. Younger individuals should bind for shorter periods and monitor their size regularly (re-measuring up to once a month) as they continue to grow. For individuals under 18, we must advise you to seek a parent or guardian's permission before using a chest binder.

10. **Medical Conditions:** If you have medical conditions that affect your breathing or range of movement, such as asthma or hypermobility, consult with a doctor before binding.

11. **Mental Health:** Take care of your mental health, especially if you experience dysphoria. Reach out to someone you trust or a mental health charity for support during challenging times.

These guidelines emphasize the importance of safety, self-care, and seeking professional advice when necessary. Properly practicing chest binding can help individuals feel more comfortable with their gender expression without the added worry of possible health effects.

How to Measure Yourself

So now you have read about how to stay safe, here's how to make sure you are in the right size.

We take two measurements, using a soft tape measure like you get in a sewing kit. Ideally you should measure yourself without clothes, but if you're uncomfortable wear something thin so that your measurements are as accurate as possible. Please do not wear any underwear on your chest as that could also be misleading.

You will want to take one measurement from underneath your chest, around your ribs where a bra band would sit. This will be your rib measurement, which is marked on our chart in orange.

Wrap the tape measure around your body, make sure its not twisted, and lies flat to your body. Check that the tape measure is in a straight line, not with one side higher up on your body than another.

The second measurement is your chest measurement marked in blue on our chart. Using the same method measure around your chest at the largest point, for most people this is over their nipple.

If your measurements are not in the same size category on our chart. Don't worry, it's very common. We recommend you follow your rib measurement if your measurements are across 2 sizes, and if they are across 3 sizes to choose the size in the middle. If you are unsure at all please contact us and our lovely team will be more than happy to help!

	CHEST	RIB
XXS	29"- 30.5" 74cm- 77.5cm	25"- 27" 65cm- 68.5cm
XS	31"- 32.5" 79cm- 82.5cm	27.5"- 29" 70cm- 73.5cm
S	33"- 34.5" 84cm- 87.5cm	29.5"- 31" 75cm- 79cm
M	35"- 36.5" 89cm- 93cm	31.5"- 33" 79cm- 84cm
L	37"- 38.5" 94cm- 98cm	33.5"- 35" 85cm- 89cm
XL	39"- 40.5" 99cm- 103cm	35.5"- 37" 90cm- 94cm
XXL	41"- 42.5" 104cm- 108cm	37.5"- 39" 95cm- 99cm
3XL	43"- 44.5" 109cm- 113cm	39.5"- 41" 100cm- 104cm
4XL	45"- 46.5" 114cm- 118cm	41.5"- 43" 105.5cm- 109cm
5XL	47"- 48.5" 119.5cm- 123cm	43.5"- 45" 110.5cm- 114cm
6XL	49"- 50.5" 124.5cm- 128cm	45.5"- 47" 115.5cm- 119.5cm
7XL	51"- 52.5" 129.5cm- 133cm	47.5"- 49" 120.5cm- 124.5cm

Putting on your binder

When trying your binder on for the first time, it can be quite daunting. They are a tighter garment than most people are used to and you should take your time. We recommend the method in these images to safely put your binder on.

Firstly it is easiest to put a binder on clean, dry skin. Sweat and water from the shower will make the fabric more likely to cling to your skin which makes putting on and taking a binder off more difficult. If possible, ask someone to help you. Ready?

- 1) Pull the binder over one arm and right up into your armpit, making sure its over your shoulder.
- 2) This should give you enough room to get your head through.
- 3) Once your head is in, the best way to get your other arm in is to slowly but firmly point your arm through the hole straight up towards the ceiling.
- 4) Then your binder may be bunched up above your chest, so carefully unravel it and smooth it down.

You may need to adjust your chest to achieve the best results. Put one of your hands under your binder in the centre. With a flat palm gently smooth one side of your chest down and out towards your side, repeat on both sides. This allows your binder to sit flatter in the middle and can improve the appearance.

Some people readjust their chest, in a private place such as a bathroom, throughout the day.

To remove your binder hold the bottom hem with both hands and pull straight up over your head. Take your time!



Stretches

It is common for people experiencing chest dysphoria to develop bad posture, possibly from standing in a certain way to reduce the appearance of their chest. You should take regular breaks from binding and complete exercises that stretch your chest, shoulders neck and back to help prevent bad posture.

Alice Stephens (she/her), is a Specialist Musculoskeletal Physiotherapist from Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust and has provided us with these exercises.



Cervical Nod Sets: 2, Reps:10, Frequency: Little and often.

Sit down on a chair with your elbows resting on a table in front of you. Press your weight onto your elbows. Nod your head up and down with the full range of movement from touching your chin to your chest to looking at the ceiling.



Thoracic Rotation

Sets: 2, Reps: 6, Frequency: Little and often

Lie on your side with your knees bent in front of you. Extend your arms in front of you and place your palms together. Open your top arm by lifting it up and over your body. Allow your upper back to rotate backwards as you continue the movement, lowering it down on the other side of your body. Follow the arm movement with your head and only move as far as is comfortable.



Active trunk rotation

Sets: 2, Reps: 6, Frequency: Little and often

On a chair or stool, sit up tall with your shoulders back and your chin tucked in and look ahead. Rotate your body from side to side. You can use your arm on your leg or on the chair as a lever to push your body further.



Shoulder Elevation

Sets: 2, Reps: 6, Frequency: Little and often

Sit up with your back straight. Gently lift your shoulders to your ears and then relax back to your original position. Inhale as you lift your shoulders and exhale as you relax them.

Taking Care of Your Binder: Tips for Longevity

1. Gentle Hand Wash and Air Dry:

To keep your binder in top shape for as long as possible, we suggest giving it some TLC. Try hand washing it and letting it air dry whenever you can. Remember to avoid exposing it to direct heat sources – no hanging it on radiators, heaters, or tossing it in the tumble dryer. The outer fabric can be affected by excessive heat, so keep it cool.

2. Quick Clean for Minor Marks:

If you spot small marks like anti-perspirant smudges or skin transfers, don't worry! You can quickly freshen up your binder with a damp cloth or even a baby wipe when you're in a hurry.

3. Regular Washing: Keep your binder feeling fresh and clean by giving it a regular wash. This helps prevent any build-up of bacteria that might lead to skin irritation.

4. Cotton Front Inside Panel: The front panel doesn't stretch and can seem stiff when it's brand new. So, it's essential to take care of your skin, to prevent rubbing or chafing. Over time, the fabric does get softer, and using fabric softener during washing can speed up the process. But if you have sensitive skin, feel free to wear a thin layer underneath to keep any discomfort at bay.

5. Be Iron-Wise: When it comes to ironing your binder, here's a friendly tip: never iron it directly. If you need to smooth out any wrinkles, simply place a tea towel or a similar fabric barrier between the iron and your binder to protect the material. And make sure you use a low heat setting.



Neurodivergence in the LGBTQIA+ Community

Neurodivergence refers to an individual who has a less typical cognitive variation, this can fall under various diagnoses, such as: Autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia etc. Gender identities which differ from biological sex (non-cisgender identities) appear to be more common among neurodivergent people.

For example, In recent years research has shown that statistically, autistic people are more likely to experience gender dysphoria. It is estimated that

for autistic people, the prevalence of also being LGBT+ is 2-3x higher.

Autistic people also reported a significantly higher number of gender-dysphoric traits. Similarly, in a study on young people with ADHD, it was found they were 6.6x more likely to experience gender variance compared to their neurotypical counterparts.

In our customer survey in 2021, over 50% of our customers identified as neurodivergent, and Jack has ADHD.

For this reason we have made sure our binders (and other products) are as sensory friendly as possible. We even stock products such as fidget rings and other items for stimulating.

Additional Products catered to you!

We also sell products that aren't binders! We have boxer shorts that allow you to securely and discreetly attach sanitary pads, and a pouch to place a packer to create the appearance of a bulge.



We stock non-anatomical packers shown in the picture below, to fit the boxers and also our swim shorts. Swim without worrying with our secure packing pouch and water resistant foam packers.

We also have accessories, from a wide range of books on LGBTQIA+ topics, to pronoun pin badges to let people know how you would like to be referred to. Handy items like laundry bags that allow you to wash your binder without anyone seeing your items, for shared spaces such as university accommodation.



We offer t-shirts and hoodies with a range of proud LGBTQIA+ slogans and designs, trans and non-binary flag bath bombs.

The list goes on! We are always adding products to our store that we think will be helpful to people in the community and their allies. We look forward to serving you in the future!



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We plant a tree for
EVERY order

Our products **remove**
plastic from the ocean

Our packaging is discreet
AND plastic free



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Get your binder in these colours
*subject to availability

