

Dynamic Lycra Splinting

*This information sheet has been written by **Liz Scott-Tatum**, Senior Occupational Therapist and Project Coordinator at Moseley Hall Hospital in Birmingham.*

What Is Dynamic Lycra Splinting?

Dynamic Lycra Splinting, also known as second skin, is a relatively new treatment in the UK. The splints are flexible as they are made from lycra. The splints vary enormously in both size and cost. The smallest splint provided by Second Skin is a glove splint which just covers the hand (£200) and the largest is a mobility splint which covers almost the whole body (approx £1400). The cost includes two alterations for growth and change and is reviewed in the first year. An initial assessment looks at the right type of splinting to meet the individual's needs and there is no charge for the first appointment.

Where have they been tested?

The charity SCOPE has sponsored private clinics to assess the usefulness of the splints and there is also a Joint Clinic in Birmingham run in conjunction with NHS staff. The clinic sees adults and children with a range of movement problems of varying complexities. These problems may be caused by muscles working too hard (hypertonicity), not working strongly enough (hypotonicity) or being difficult to control (athetoid or ataxic).

Do they work?

As with other interventions, whilst some people will find them useful, others will not. Over the course of the two years the Joint Clinic has been running in Birmingham some people have stopped wearing the splints altogether. The reasons given include:

- Changes in the level of support available to help in getting splints on and off.
- Toileting became more difficult.
- Splint took too long to dry after washing.
- Able to maintain the functional gains achieved without continued use

Others have found the splint to be extremely beneficial, and have reported gains in functional ability. Some of the gains reported include:

- Improved control of arm movements enabling the person to access a keyboard.
- Helping the arm to rest in a more relaxed position.
- Positioning thumb and forefingers better to help with grip.

Have they been evaluated?

It is important to evaluate new interventions to ensure that they are beneficial. A project supported by SCOPE and the regional rehabilitation centre, Southern Birmingham Community Health NHS trust will report their findings shortly.

The project aims to identify:

- Where dynamic lycra splinting is effective
- What impact the use of these splints has upon an individual's function
- What factors influence the success or rejection of this type of splinting
- Guidelines for provision
- Information to support a case for lycra splints to be supplied through the NHS
- Further research questions and studies to compare different types of lycra splints

Liz says...

“As a clinician working in the NHS multidisciplinary Dynamic Lycra Splinting clinics at Birmingham, I believe that lycra splinting does have the potential to help some people with movement difficulties. As yet the research evidence is limited and there are still many questions that needs answering”

For further information contact SCOPE, Cerebral Palsy Helpline, PO Box 833, Milton Keynes, MK12 5NY Telephone: 0808 800 3333 or contact Second Skin 020 7607 1048

HemiHelp has a range of leaflets covering many of the areas touched on above, and also a Useful Names and Addresses List to help you contact other organisations.

HemiHelp

6 Market Road

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Helpline: 0845 123 2372

(Mon-Fri 10am-1pm)

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