

Binding 101

Binding refers to the flattening of the breast tissue using compression that is intended to create the effect of having a smoother chest. This can be done when someone is transitioning from female to male or beyond the binary. Binding can help to lessen body dysphoria.

DO:

1. Use sports compression wear. A lot of athletic companies make compression shirts. They're easy to put on and often in stock at athletic stores like Dicks Sporting Goods & Fleet Feet so you can even try them on! Fleet Feet offers a 1/month sizing workshop.
2. Use layers. This can be super useful if you've already bound your chest and you still have some visible chest tissue, or if you don't own anything to bind with. It's not hugely effective if you have a large chest, but better than nothing. A tight sports bra or undershirt under one or two larger shirts can make your chest look dramatically smaller (button up shirts hanging loose, particularly ones with pockets on the chest are great for this). Binders can often cause chaffing and a way to avoid this is to wear a tight t-shirt underneath your binder.
3. Wash your binder regularly. Most binders have to be washed by hand and laid flat to dry.

DON'T:

1. Use an ace bandage or duct tape. This can severely restrict your breathing or cause fluid build-up in the lungs. It can even break your ribs. These materials were not meant for binding and can cause you serious harm. Some people are allergic to adhesives and this can also cause skin irritation.
2. Buy a binder that is too small for you. This can cause breathing issues as well.
3. Tape/Layer binders. One well-fitting binder can be helpful but wearing more than one can cause issues.
4. Bind 24/7. Give your body a break. Don't bind for more than 8-12 hours at a time. Use the time you aren't binding to wash and air dry your binder so it lasts longer.
5. Wear your binder to sleep. Wearing your binder to sleep can cause serious harm including death.
6. Bind if it is painful. Pain is your body's way of letting you know that something is wrong.
7. Although many people wear their binders while working out, this is not recommended because it can restrict breathing and movement.

HOW TO CHOOSE A BINDER

Each brand of binder has unique sizing and it's important to double check their sizing chart to make sure you are getting the correct fit. Measuring yourself can help with accurate sizing. The below measuring scale should help you navigate sizing charts but sizing is always variable:

1. Take a snug measurement of the fullest part of your chest using a tape measure (best if measured while clothed) and write that number down.
2. Measure underneath your chest where the crease is and write that number down as well.
3. Add those numbers together and divide the sum by 2. This number will help differentiate your size not only from brand to brand but from binder to binder as well.
4. Make sure to consider sizing, materials, comfort, cost and your own body's needs.

There are two types of binders: short and long. The short ones end right at your waist. The downside of these is that if you carry some extra weight, short binders tend to roll up and act more like a bra. The long ones can be pulled down past your waist by several inches, however it's inevitable that it will still roll up. To reduce the chances of this, wear a belt. Choosing between a short and long binder has more to do with your body type, specifically your abdomen, and not your chest size.

You will also want to consider the what materials are used to make your binder. Some heavier, thicker binders can begin to smell like chemicals when the wearer is sweating. It is always important to wash your binder regularly.

PLACES TO BUY A BINDER

Underworks (underworks.com/ftm) sells binders originally made for cisgender men with gynecomastia, and subsequently became popular with transgender men for their effectiveness and affordability. Underworks is trans-friendly and have excellent customer service as well. Stick to the binders that have “extreme” in the name or description. A binder without this label may not give you the compression you hoped for unless you have a very small chest already. Prices range from \$25-45.

FtM Essentials (ftmessentials.com) also sells underworks binders. FtM Essentials runs a free youth binder program for those who cannot financially afford a binder. There are a limited number of binders available each month and the waitlist can be lengthy.

gc2b (gc2b.co) sells binders designed by trans people for trans people. Be careful to follow their sizing guide as these binders will fit differently than from other companies. The binders come in two different styles and eleven different colors including a new nude line which includes a variety of skin tones. Also available through Amazon. Prices range from \$30-35.

T-Kingdom (t-kingdom.com) is based in Taiwan and sells binders designed for trans men and gender benders. They have a wide variety of styles, including vest binders with Velcro. Prices range from \$30-65. Note: T-Kingdom doesn't accept returns.

Danaë (danae.info) is a trans guy owned and operated company from the Netherlands. Prices range from €30-45, but be mindful of shipping costs as well. They allow returns after an email notification and within seven days of your receiving your binder. They also have products serving trans women. (Note: the website is in Dutch but has pictures and is quite easy to navigate.)

Love Boat Shop (lesloveboat.com/shop/) is online store based in Taiwan. They feature a large selection of binder styles and colors made by Double T Collection, Esha and Juya, with prices ranging from \$21-100.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please feel free to talk to the Transgender Youth Program social worker and physician for more information about binding. You can speak with us at your visit or reach out to our office by phone at (802) 847-3811.

Help us improve this information sheet. If there are questions that you wish were answered, please speak with the program social worker.

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