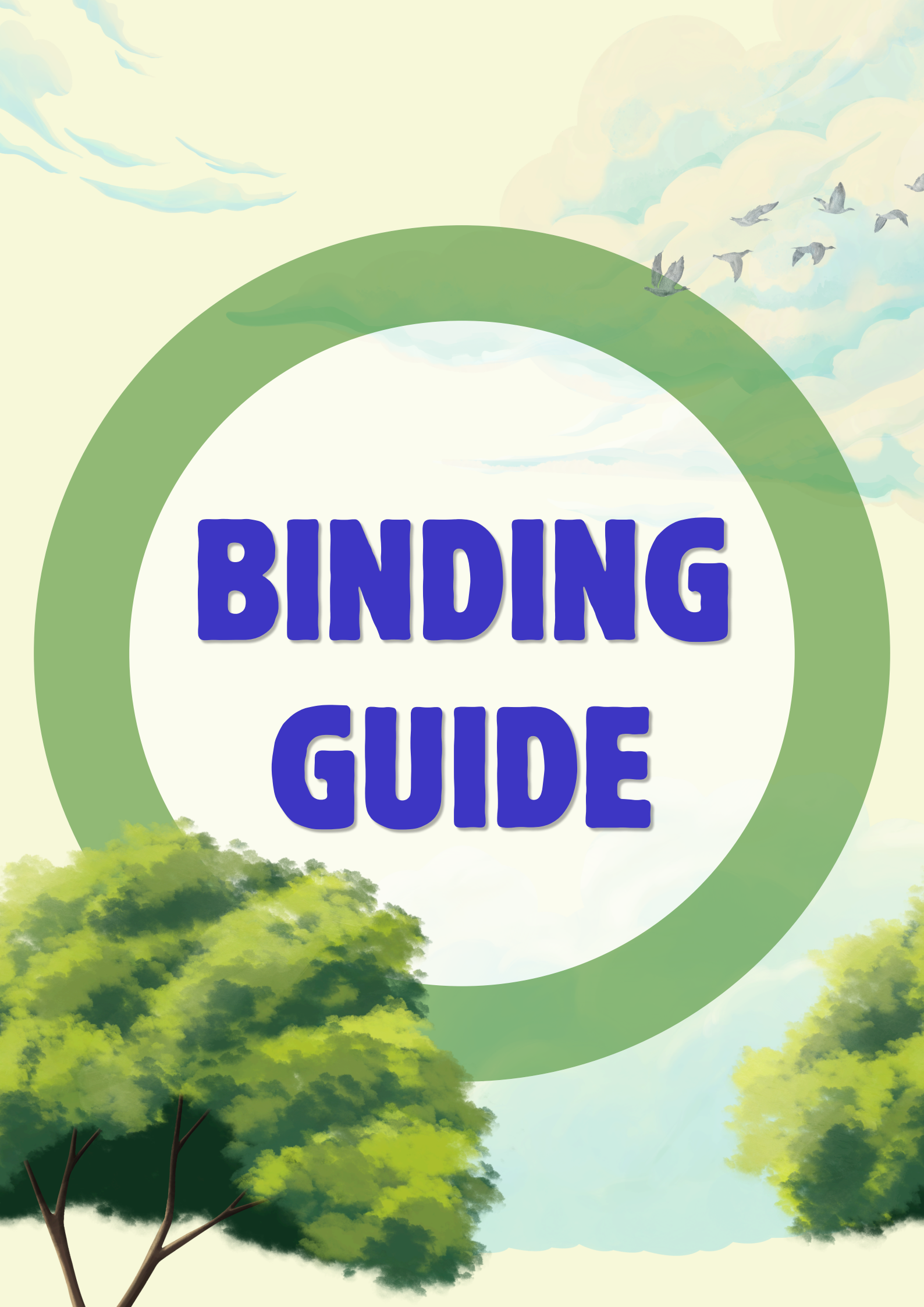
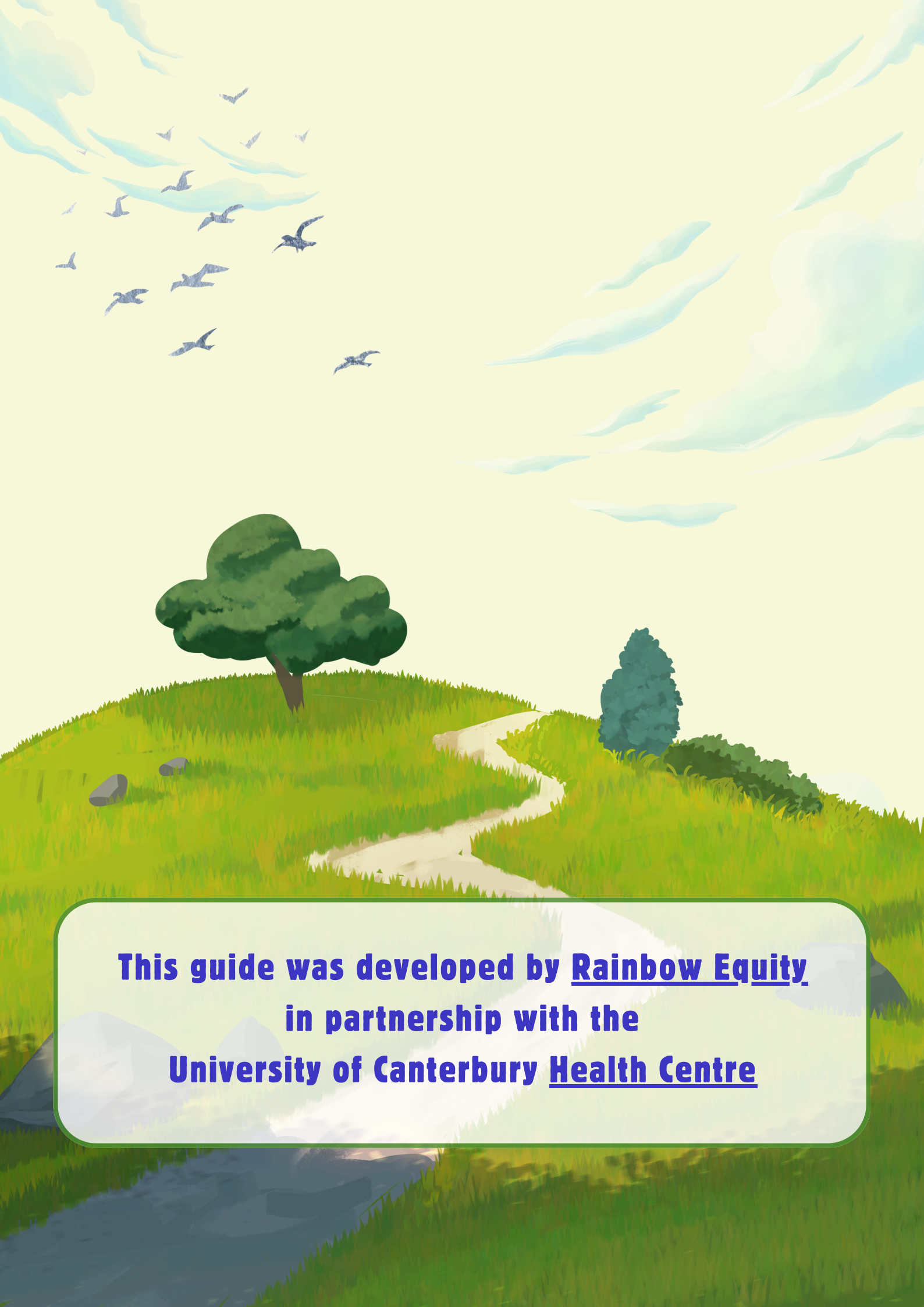




BINDING GUIDE



**This guide was developed by Rainbow Equity
in partnership with the
University of Canterbury Health Centre**

BINDING GUIDE

WHAT IS BINDING?

Binding is a process of compressing chest tissue to affirm one's gender. Binding can help a person feel more comfortable in their body by creating the appearance of a flatter chest. This might be a good option for people who aren't able to get (or don't want) top surgery but want to alleviate feelings of gender dysphoria.

The binding that is portrayed on TV and in movies doesn't usually model healthy binding techniques. Binding using bandages, duct tape, or plastic wrap can be dangerous and harmful to your body. These materials can restrict both movement and breathing or even cut into your skin and break ribs.

If you have any questions about binding, you can reach out to UC's Rainbow Leads or a nurse or your GP for more support

This guide will provide: some tips for binding safely and some binding options.

BINDER FITTING ADVICE

Binders that fit properly will be snug but won't restrict breathing, won't roll up at the bottom, and won't dig in anywhere (including the shoulder straps).

You should be able to take full, deep breaths while wearing your binder.

Take your measurements based on size guides and the process outlined by the company you buy from. Taking your own measurements can be difficult, it's more accurate if someone else helps you.

Putting on and taking off a binder for the first time can be difficult. You can find some helpful videos online that show the best methods for putting on and taking off a binder.

WARNING SIGNS THAT YOUR BINDER IS TOO TIGHT

Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, bruising or broken skin, numbness or tingling, sharp pains in ribs or back, and/or dizziness or light-headedness.

If you experience any of these signs take your binder off immediately

BINDING SAFELY

Get the right binder

Measure according to the company's guidelines and get the right size, if it feels wrong, send it back and try a different size. Re-measure yourself every 4-6 months to ensure that you are still wearing the correct size. Wearing a binder that is too small can have permanent and painful effects on your body, especially your ribs.

First time use

Wear your binder for a short time, max 2-3 hours initially. Slowly increase duration over several weeks to allow your body to adjust to the compression.

Binding goal for the day

Not every day is the same, consider your goal for today. Remember this doesn't have to be as flat as possible, all bodies have curves and bumps. Think about what you will be doing, what your body needs, and what the weather will be like that day.

Hygiene

Clean and moisturise your skin regularly. Wash your binder often, usually after you have worn your binder 1-3 times. You may need to wash your binder more regularly in summer.

Look after your body

You should only wear your binder for 6-8 hours. If you are stuck in a situation where you are wearing it for longer than 8 hours, find a private space like a bathroom, take your binder off for at least 15 minutes and have a break while stretching and doing deep breathing exercises. Never wear your binder while sleeping. Ensure that your skin is dry before you put on your binder, particularly after a shower. Listen to your body, if you experience any pain or shortness of breath take your binder off immediately.

Take longer breaks

Ensure that once a week you have at least 1-2 days completely binder-free. While this might be difficult if you are experiencing lots of dysphoria it's important to look after your body for the future. Binding incorrectly can lead to long-term effects like changes to rib structure that can affect your breathing and may mean you are ineligible for other gender-affirming healthcare, like top surgery.

Physical activity

It is not recommended to engage in physical activity in a binder, this includes all movement activities in which your breathing rate might increase like going to the gym and swimming. Some brands make light binders or swim binders that are designed for sport and swimming. If you do wear a binder during physical activity, wear a binder that is a size bigger than usual.

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Binding compresses the ribcage and can lead to tightness in chest muscles, restricted breathing, and postural changes. These exercises help maintain flexibility, breathing capacity, and can make you more comfortable.

Breathing Exercises (Daily)

Best with your binder off

DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

- Lie on your back with one hand on your chest and one on your belly
- Breathe deeply so your belly rises more than your chest
- Practice 5-10 minutes daily
- Helps re-establish proper breathing patterns

RIB EXPANSION BREATHING

- Place hands on sides of ribcage
- Breathe deeply, feeling your ribs expand laterally
- 10 deep breaths, twice daily

You could do these before you get out of bed in the morning or just before bed at night

Stretching Routine (Daily)

10-15 minutes

DOORWAY CHEST STRETCH

- Stand in a doorway with forearm resting against the frame (elbow at 90°)
- Step forward until you feel a stretch across your chest
- Hold 30 seconds each side, repeat 3 times
- Do this at least twice daily, especially after removing binder

THORACIC EXTENSION OVER FOAM ROLLER

- Lie on your back with a foam roller under your shoulder blades
- Support your head with hands, elbows wide
- Gently arch back over the roller
- Hold 30 seconds, repeat 5 times

THREAD THE NEEDLE STRETCH

- Start on hands and knees
- Reach one arm under your body, rotating your torso
- Hold 30 seconds each side, repeat 3 times
- Great for upper back and ribcage mobility

CAT-COW STRETCH

- On hands and knees, alternate between arching and rounding your back
- Focus on expanding your ribcage with each movement
- Perform 10-15 slow repetitions

Strengthening Exercises

Ideally 3x per week

SCAPULAR SQUEEZES

- Sit or stand with arms at sides
- Squeeze shoulder blades together
- Hold 5 seconds, repeat 15 times
- Counteracts rounded shoulder posture

WALL ANGELS

- Stand with back against wall
- Slide arms up and down the wall in a snow angel motion
- Keep contact with wall throughout
- Perform 10 repetitions

PRONE Y'S AND T'S

- Lie face-down on bed with arms hanging off edge
- Raise arms into Y or T position
- Hold 3 seconds, lower slowly
- 10 repetitions each position

See a medical professional or Physiotherapist if you experience:

- Persistent pain in ribs, back, or shoulders
- Reduced range of motion in shoulders or spine
- Difficulty breathing even when not binding
- Numbness or tingling that doesn't resolve

BUYING A BINDER



Transcend
Aotearoa
XS - 3XL



Bind Me
Aotearoa
XS - 3XL



Transform
Australia
XXS - 5XL



**Sock
Draw
Heroes**
Australia
XXS - 5XL



**Spectrum
Outfitters**
UK
XXS - 7XL



WIVOV
USA
XS - 6XL

For larger chests

A long binder can be a good option for folks with a large chest. Long binders offer more fabric coverage, compared with a shorter binder, which can allow the wearer to adjust their chest tissue in multiple different ways to achieve a flatter appearance that works for them.

BINDING WITH TAPE

Many of these companies also sell binding tape which is an option that might work better for some folks, particularly for those with a small to medium chest. Some folks with a larger chest find that tape also works for them, however you might need to purchase a wider tape.

If you are taping you need to ensure that you do so safely and with binding tape.



This guide from [TransTape](#) is a helpful place to start

NEED SUPPORT?



Book an appointment with one of UC's [Rainbow Leads](#)

Book an appointment with a nurse or GP at your medical centre

Peer support around gender affirmation is available from [Qtopia](#) through the 'Trans Package of Wellness'. You can ask your GP to refer you to this service.



