



Northern Nevada HOPES

A Guide to Healthy Binding

Gender Affirming Care Program





Introduction

Chest binding makes the chest appear flatter and more masculine, reducing feelings of gender dysphoria. Binding helps people feel more comfortable and safer in public, increases confidence and overall mood, and reduces thoughts of suicide for people who experience chest dysphoria (Peitzmeier et al., 2017; Julian et al., 2021).

While most people who bind feel that the benefits outweigh the negative outcomes of binding, it is important to be aware of some of the risks and impacts this practice can have.

Some possible negative impacts are pain in the back, chest, shoulders, and breasts, shortness of breath, increases in bad posture, dizziness, and overheating. Binding can also create warm, moist environments that lead to more acne and can foster skin infections (Peitzmeier et al., 2017; Julian et al., 2021).

These risks increase for people who bind for longer periods of time, bind more frequently, or bind with less safe materials.

This guide provides information to help you better understand healthy binding. Please know that there is no such thing as a completely flat chest. Every individual is different, and practices that work for one person might not work for another. If you have a larger chest or medical conditions that can affect binding, please don't be discouraged!

There are a multitude of gender-affirming options available. For everyone, it is a matter of trial and error to find what works best for you. Our goal is to provide evidence-based information that will help individuals make the best decisions for their personal health, needs, and lifestyle.



Table Of Contents

Methods of binding	2-5
Tips for Healthy Binding	6-7
Brands to Try Out	8-11
Measuring for Sizing	11
Binder Donation Programs	12
Citations and Helpful Resources	13



Methods of Binding



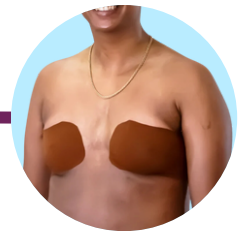
Sports Bras



Sports Compression Tops



Layering Shirts



TransTape

Sports Bras

A tight-fitting sports bra can help flatten the chest. While not as effective as a designated binder, sports bras can be a cheaper alternative. This method is more effective for people with smaller chests.

Sports Compression Tops

Many athletic brands make compression shirts that you can buy in stores or online. These provide some binding, and are more effective for people with smaller chests. These tops can be used under other clothes to help the chest look even flatter.

Layering Shirts

Layering shirts can help minimize the appearance of the chest. Wearing a tight shirt or sports bra under a larger shirt such as a loose button up can create a flatter appearance.

TransTape

TransTape is a medical-grade tape designed for binding. It is made to be used on the skin and can be used to flatten and secure tissue on the chest. Benefits of this method are that it is waterproof, doesn't wrap around the chest to constrict it, and is generally safe to wear for a few days per application. This means that you could exercise, shower, and sleep in this tape so long as you are not experiencing any pain or discomfort.

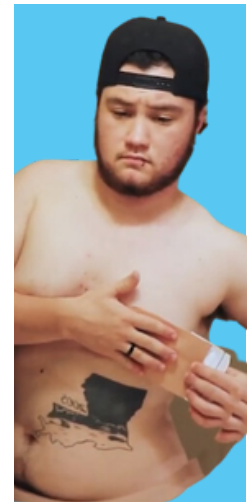
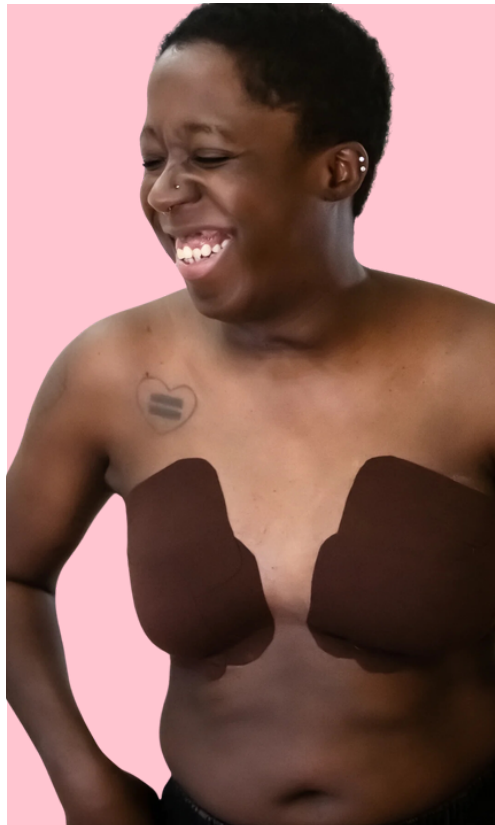
TransTape *continued from page 2*

The adhesive is very strong so the tape will not come off, but this also means removing the tape can be difficult and hurt the skin. The TransTape brand also sells products such as an oil to assist in removal of the tape.

It is important to note that some people find TransTape very difficult to use, especially when first trying it out. The TransTape website has guides for using this product that some people might find helpful.

An important step when using any kind of medical tape on your skin is to use a small piece of tape to check for skin reactions or allergies. Even tapes that say they're hypoallergenic may cause reactions for some people.

It is best to follow the instructions of the tape's manufacturer for how to test that tape on your skin. A good rule of thumb is if the manufacturer doesn't have instructions on how to test for possible allergies, you should look for a different brand. Also, be aware that some people can develop an allergy over repeated use. Always listen to your body and remove the tape if you have any skin reactions.



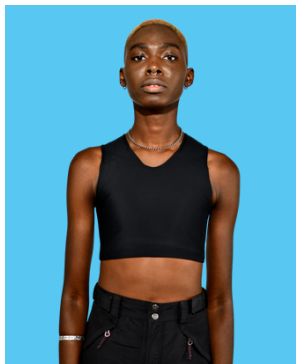
transtape.life

Methods of Binding

Designated Binders

Designated binders are garments designed with the purpose of chest binding for trans and gender non-conforming people. An increasing number of reputable sources are now selling these online. They tend to be more expensive, but often provide more effective flattening than other methods, especially for people with larger chests. *Please see the “Tips for Healthy Binding” section for more information on how to use these binders safely. Binders pictured on this page are from gc2b.*

Styles of Designated Binders



Half Binders

These binders are cropped at the waist, above the belly button. Less coverage of the torso makes them cooler for summer use. Some half binders tend to roll up at the bottom edge, which can make the binder more noticeable under clothing. People with larger chests may find half binders don't provide enough coverage.



Full Binders

These binders go down to or past the hips and compress the entire torso. They appear like an undershirt and can square the silhouette to minimize the appearance of curves. While the bottom may roll up, they can be tucked into pants to reduce this. The increased coverage can be hot, especially during warm weather.



Tank Binders

Similar in appearance to full binders, these binders go down to or past the hips. Unlike full binders, they only compress the chest and not the rest of the torso. They are less likely to roll up at the bottom and provide more flexibility around the abdomen. Some tank binders may have a noticeable line in the fabric where the binding material ends below the chest. Like half binders, these binders may not provide enough coverage for people with larger chests.

Closure Types of Designated Binders



Pullover

Pullover binders are the most common type of binder. The fabric is continuous or sewn together, and the binder must be stepped into or pulled on over the head. They are not adjustable, so it is important to refer to the brand's size chart to ensure you get the right fit. These binders can be more difficult to get on and off, but they tend to wear out slower than other types.

Half Binder from gc2b



Zip

Zip binders have a zipper that is used to secure the binder, making it easier to take on and off. They are not adjustable, so it is important to refer to the brand's size chart to ensure you get the right fit. They are slow to wear out, but the zipper may appear bulky under other clothes.

Zip Binder from T-Kingdom



Velcro

Velcro binders use Velcro, usually along the side of the binder under the arm, to secure the binder. They are easier to put on and take off than pull over binders. Velcro binders are also adjustable, giving the wearer more control over how much compression the binder provides. However, this also means that the user needs to be careful about binding too tightly. Velcro also can wear out more quickly over time than other closure types.

Velcro Binder from T-Kingdom



Clasp or Buckle

Clasp or buckle binders use hooks to secure the binder, usually along the side under the arm. They are easier to put on and off than pull over binders. Most clasp binders have multiple rows of hooks to attach to, making them adjustable. Like with Velcro binders, this can allow the user to adjust the fit as needed, but risk binding too tightly. Clasp binders also can catch on other clothes if you wash them in a machine, which can pull the binder out of shape and ruin it.

Clasp binder from Origami Customs



Tips For Healthy Binding

Remember and Apply

Only use materials safe for binding

The use of unsafe binding materials leads to much higher rate of negative results.

Avoid using:

- **Ace bandages** - Ace bandages are not made for chest binding and constrict the chest too tightly. This leads to problems breathing and can cause permanent damage to the lungs, chest muscles, and ribs.
- **Plastic wrap** - Plastic wrap does not allow for proper air flow, increasing the risk of bacterial or fungal skin infections on the chest and back.
- **Duct tape** - Duct tape is not designed to be used on skin. the adhesive can cause skin irritation and removing it can cause damage to the skin and increase risk for infection.

Avoid exercising in your binder

Binders can make it more difficult to breathe, and this effect can become much more noticeable when you exercise. Exercising requires you to breathe more deeply, which binders can make difficult. This can lead to dizziness and lightheadedness. Exercising also requires free movement, which binders tend to prevent. Sweating and getting warm encourages the growth of germs that may cause skin infections, as well. *Instead, it is generally safe to wear a well-fitting sports bra or TransTape to bind while exercising.*

Do not sleep in your binder

Like other daytime clothing, remove your binder before bed. Sleeping in a binder can further crush the chest and make it more difficult to breathe while you sleep.

Get the right size

(don't go down in size to increase compression)

When buying a designated binder from a reputable source, use their sizing chart to determine which size is right for you. Don't go down in size to increase compression; a binder that is too small for you puts undue strain on your chest, prevents normal breathing, and increases damage to your skin, muscles, and ribs. If you are between sizes, you should go with the size up.



Fit breaks into your binding schedule

Binding for long periods of time and every day can increase the likelihood that a person will have negative experiences related to their binding. Try to bind for less than 8 hours each day. Long binding sessions increase damage to skin, muscles, and ribs. Doctors also recommend taking at least 1 day per week off of binding to give your body a break.

Take care of your binder

Washing your binder regularly helps prevent acne and skin infections that can arise when your binder is unclean. Follow the instructions on the tag, or wash your binder in cold water on a delicate cycle. You can also wash your binder by hand in the sink with warm water and laundry detergent. Binders should generally be hung up to dry and not put into a dryer. Storing your binder on a hanger when you are not wearing it can help it keep its shape, too.

Stop binding if you are in pain

Stop binding if you're in pain or having trouble breathing. Pain is the body's way of telling you that something is wrong. If you are experiencing pain, stop and consider trying something different – a larger binder, a different method of binding, or give yourself a longer break before trying again. Remember that finding what works best for you will take some trial and error, and that is okay!



Brands to Try Out

Northern Nevada HOPES is not affiliated with any of these brands. This is simply a list of reputable companies that sell designated binders, as recommended by our transgender and gender diverse staff and patients!



gc2b

www.gc2b.co

gc2b was founded and is owned by a Black and Latinx trans man; their binders are designed by and for transmasculine people. They have a chat bot built into the website that will help you find your size.

- **Binder types:** half and tank style pull over binders
- **Colors:** large variety (solid colors across the rainbow, pride-themed prints, skin tones)
- **Price:** \$35-45



Tank style pull over binder "Nude No. 1 Tank" from the gc2b store.



Flavnt

flavnt.com

Flavnt is a queer-owned and operated brand with a variety of queer clothing options, stickers, and a small selection of binders. The "about" section on their website has a guide for finding your size.

- **Binder types:** half style pull over binders
- **Colors:** skin tones, black, and white
- **Price:** ~\$50

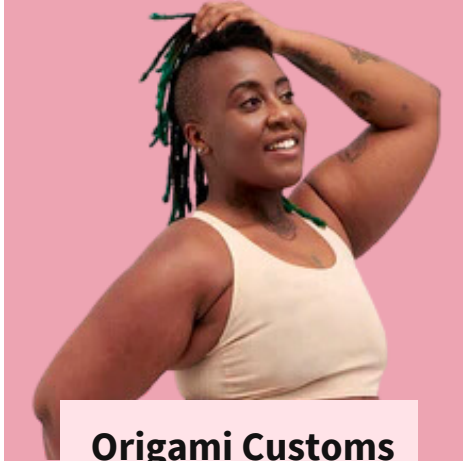


Half style pull over binder "Sand Bareskin 2.0" from the Flavnt store.



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Origami Customs

origamicustoms.com

Origami Customs is a trans-owned and operated underwear and swimwear company. They offer free custom sizing if you don't fit well into one of the categories on their sizing chart.

- **Binder types:** half style pull over and clasp binders
- **Colors:** skin tones, black, and white
- **Price:** \$60-80



Half style clasp binder "Side-Open Mesh Half Binder"



Shapeshifters

shapeshifters.com

Shapeshifters is a trans-owned and operated binder brand. They make most of their binders to order; you provide your measurements instead of selecting a size. Within a window of time, you can send the binder back for free alterations if the fit is not quite right. For a small charge, they also will send you fabric samples to help you decide which material to go with.

- **Binder types:** half style pull over binders
- **Colors:** many colors and prints
- **Price:** \$80-200



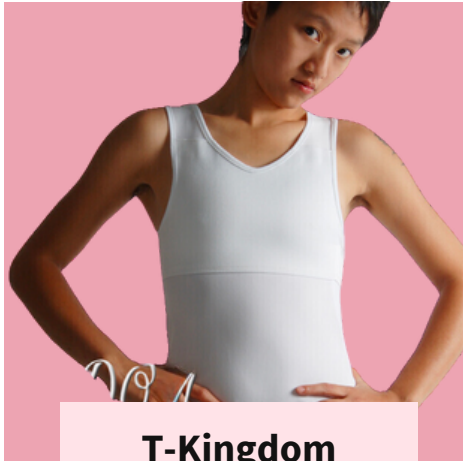
Full style pull over binder from "Pride Binder" collection on the Shapeshifters store.





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T-Kingdom

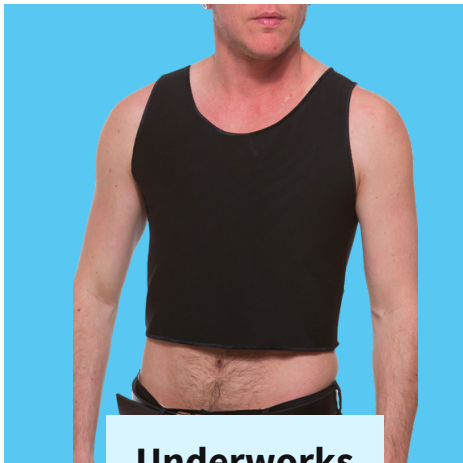
t-kingdom.com

T-Kingdom is a transmasculine founded and owned brand based in Taiwan. They also have a small selection of swim binders.

- **Binder types:** half and tank style pull over, velcro, and zipper binders
- **Colors:** white and black
- **Price:** \$45-80



Tank style Velcro binder "Model-1700 Elasticity Strong Breast Binder"



Underworks

f2mbinders.com

Underworks has compression wear for people of all genders, including cisgender and transgender individuals. They have a line of binders and swim gear specifically for transmasculine individuals.

- **Binder types:** half and full style pull over binders
- **Colors:** white, black, and cream
- **Price:** \$25-40

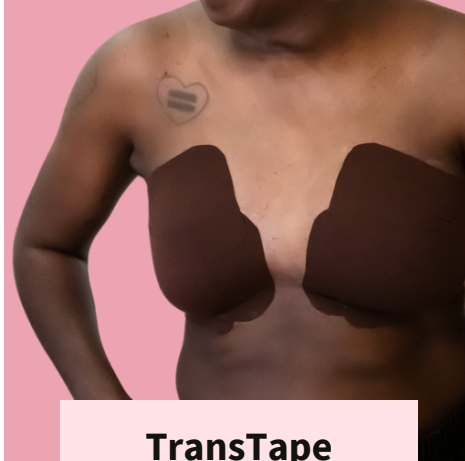


Half style pullover binder "Underworks FTM Extreme Tri-top Chest Binder"



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TransTape

transtape.life

TransTape is a trans-founded and operated brand that offers medical-grade tapes specifically designed for use in binding. Their website has instructional guides for using the tape, with instructions broken down by chest size. Please see the “Methods of Binding” section for more information on binding with tape.

- **Colors:** skin tones, black, white, solid colors of the rainbow
- **Price:** \$15-18 for single rolls (16.5 ft)

they estimate it will last for 1-3 months depending on frequency of use and how often you change the tape. They also sell kits with both tape and their skin care products for \$23-90 (price depending on how many products are in the kit).



TransTape in the tone #003



TransTape “Ultimate Kit” in the tone #002

Measuring for Sizing

Some binder brands have nice guides for how to measure yourself to find your fit with their size chart. A couple of helpful ones are listed below. The same methods shown in these can be used to find your measurements for sizing charts of other brands.



gc2b

https://www.gc2b.co/pages/sizing_



Origami Customs

https://origamicustoms.com/pages/sizing_



Binder Donation Programs

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Access to
Free
Options!

Genderbands

- Binder giveaways
- They also take applications for grants that can help cover social and medical transition costs



genderbands.org

Point of Pride

- Provides free binders from gc2b
- Anyone who identifies as transgender or gender non-conforming and expresses hardship about obtaining a binder can get one. They are currently on a long wait list (about a year and a half wait between requesting one and the binder getting shipped to you)
- They also have grants for medical transition costs.



pointofpride.org

FTM Essentials Free Youth Binder Program

- Free binders for people under 24 years old provided on a lottery system to a limited number of people every 3 months.



ftm essentials.com

Citations and Helpful Resources

Anchor Health (March 1, 2022). “All About Chest Binding” <https://anchorhealthct.org/all-about-chest-binding/>

Cleveland Clinic (July 26, 2021). “How to Bind Your Chest Safely” <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/safe-chest-binding/>

Fenway Health. “Binding Resources” [https://fenwayhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/TH-159 Trans-Health-Binding-Guide-for-2022_2.pdf](https://fenwayhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/TH-159_Trans-Health-Binding-Guide-for-2022_2.pdf)

Minus18 (December 18, 2017). “How to Bind Your Chest Safely and Healthily” <https://www.minus18.org.au/articles/how-to-bind-your-chest-safely-and-healthily>

Oregon Health and Science University. “About Chest Binding” <https://www.ohsu.edu/sites/default/files/2022-03/Gender-Clinic-Chest-Binding-Handout.pdf>

Point of Pride (January 5, 2018). “Binding 101: Tips to Bind Your Chest Safely” <https://www.pointofpride.org/blog/binding-101-tips-to-bind-your-chest-safely>

Sarah Peitzmeier, Ivy Gardner, Jamie Weinand, Alexandra Corbet & Kimberlynn Acevedo. (2017). Health impact of chest binding among transgender adults: a community-engaged, cross-sectional study. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 19:1, 64-75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/>

Jamie Julian, Bianca Salvetti, Jordan Held, Paula Murray, Lucas Lara-Rojas, & Johanna Olson-Kennedy. (2021). The impact of chest binding in transgender and gender diverse youth and adults. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 68:6, 1129-1134. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2020.09.029>

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