

Gallows traction

Information for patients, parents and guardians

We've given you this factsheet because your child is due to have a treatment known as 'gallows traction'. This involves lifting your child's legs as they lie in a cot, to create a gentle stretch.

We hope this factsheet will help to answer some of the questions you may have.

What is gallows traction for?

Gallows traction can be used for two reasons:

1. Before surgery (open hip reduction) as part of the treatment for hip dysplasia. The pull of the traction gently stretches the muscles and ligaments around the joint, making surgery safer and easier.
2. To treat a broken thigh bone (fractured femur) in infants up to 12 kgs.

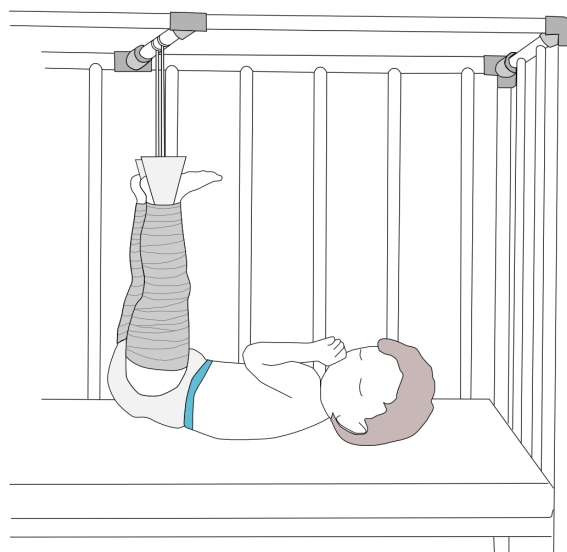
How is gallows traction set up?

Your child will be in a cot for their treatment.

We will apply sticky dressing strips made of fabric to both sides of their legs. There are soft foam pieces which go over the ankle bones to protect them. We will wrap bandages around your child's legs to secure the dressing strips in place.

There is a cord attached at the end of the dressing strips. Your child's legs are lifted up so their body is in an 'L' shape (see picture). The cord is tied to a bar at the top of the cot, so that

your child's bottom is lifted just off the mattress. Your child's body weight provides the gentle traction.



How long will my child need to have gallows traction for?

Before surgery (open hip reduction) to relocate your child's hip into the joint, they will need to have gallows traction treatment for one week. If your child has a broken thigh bone, the surgeon will let you know how long they will need to be treated with gallows traction.

How do I look after my child while they are having gallows traction?

Young children may be unsettled for a short while when the traction is first put on. Give your child lots of reassurance, cuddles and com-

fort. It is important to continue to play with your child, as you would do normally.

The nurses will help you to care for your child. They will show you how to change their nappies, wash them, change their clothing and feed them.

You will be able to feed your child their usual food, giving them small amounts at first until they are used to the new position for feeding. Your child can wear any clothes that pull on over their head, such as bodysuits with poppers that do up under their bottom, dresses or T-shirts. Socks can be put on your child's feet to keep them warm.

Your child will be in the cot all the time they are having gallow's traction treatment. As well as lying flat they will often twist over onto their front and prop themselves up on their elbows. Place your child's favourite toys within easy reach in the cot, so that they can play easily. When your child turns onto their front, the pull of the traction is not affected.

What are the potential problems of this treatment?

We will monitor your child very carefully to make sure there is no skin irritation from the traction. Occasionally they may get some redness or a small blister under the traction tapes. The nurse will remove the outer bandages regularly to check the condition of your child's skin.

Useful links

www.hipdysplasia.org

STEPS: The National Association for Children with Lower Limb Abnormalities

www.steps-charity.org.uk

Email: info@steps-charity.org.uk

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us using the details below:

Advanced nurse practitioners (Julia and Liz)
Telephone: **023 8120 4991** (Monday to Thursday)

Nurse practitioners
Mobile: **07584 402438** (Monday to Friday)

Children's orthopaedic ward (G3)
Telephone: **023 8120 6486**

Appointment rescheduling
Telephone: **023 8120 5758**

Research clinic
Telephone: **023 8120 4989**

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audiotape, please telephone **023 8120 4688** for help.

www.uhs.nhs.uk/childrenshospital

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