

CHEST BINDING 101



Chest binding is a way for many [trans men](#) to curb dysphoria, and is a fairly common step in [FTM transition](#). “Binding” refers to flattening breast tissue to create a male-appearing chest using a variety of materials and methods. While binding with common household items is an inexpensive route, it can also be unsafe. [Chest Binding 101](#) is your guide to how to bind safely, where to get a chest binder, how to choose a binder that best suits you, and how to put on your binder.

How to Chest Bind Safely

The first step in learning how to bind safely is finding about what’s not safe to do. **Don’t use Ace bandages or duct tape**—they aren’t meant for binding, don’t move with your body, and can cause physical harm. They can seriously restrict breathing, cause fluid build-up in your lungs and other serious injuries, such as broken ribs. There have been numerous cases of trans men who’ve acquired permanent scars and other injuries from using Ace bandages or duct tape to bind. Don’t do it.

Can chest binding affect my ability to have [FTM Top Surgery](#)? “Generally speaking, no. Binding over a long period of time can alter your skin’s natural elasticity, which may have some minor affects on your final cosmetic results.” – Dr. Scott Mosser

Even with the right binder product it’s still possible to bind unsafely. Despite what you may have been told, **don’t buy a binder that’s too small for you**. Wearing an ill-fitting binder puts you at risk of the same problems as those who bind with Ace bandages or duct tape. Another piece of bad advice floating around out there is to wear tape and/or another binder on top of your binder. This too can cause restricted breathing and physical injury.

Lastly, give your body a break: don’t bind 24/7. In fact, **don’t bind for more than 8–12 hours at a time**. Suppressing dysphoria can’t come at the expense of your health. Even high quality binders can cause bruising. Use the times that you’re not binding to wash and air dry your binder, which will help make it last longer.

Where to Get a Chest Binder

A proper chest binder should minimize pain, discomfort, sweating, and irritation. There are several places online where you can buy chest binders specifically designed for [trans men](#):



[Underworks](#) sells binders originally made for cisgender men with [gynecomastia](#), and subsequently became popular with [transgender men](#) for their effectiveness and affordability.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 USD.



[Double T Collection](#) is another trans guy owned and operated company dedicated to the FTM community. Based in Taiwan, they have three binders to choose from priced at \$72–84 USD. The Love Boat Shop (see below) also sells Double T binders.



[Wow-Wow-Wear](#) is a Blogspot site established in 2009 that sells Esha binders from Taiwan. Esha binders are high quality, durable and easily washable and come in three different styles, with prices in the \$32–42 USD range. The Love Boat Shop (see below) also sells Esha binders.



[T-Kingdom](#) is also based in Taiwan and sells binders designed for [trans men](#) and gender binders. They have a wide variety of styles, including vest binders with Velcro. Prices range from \$30–65 USD.

Note: T-Kingdom doesn't accept returns.



[Love Boat Shop](#) is another 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 USD.

[Danaë](#) is a trans guy owned and operated company from the Netherlands, offering European guys the chance to save on shipping. Prices range from €30–45, and they allow returns after an email notification and within seven days of your receiving your binder.



[Design Veronique](#) has been designing high quality compression garments since 1986 and is the choice of several US-based surgeons. However, higher prices in the \$100–180 USD range, and a lack of

information about if these products are durable enough for long term use call into question their suitability for daily chest binding.



[Nabay](#) is a lesser known company located in Japan. They appear to have a good variety of binder styles to choose from, however all products are currently sold out and they didn't respond to a request

for more information. Prices range from \$105–112 USD.

Quick Comparison Chart

Company	Location	Price (USD)	Trans Owned
Underworks	USA	\$25-45	N
Double Collection	Taiwan	\$72-84	Y
Wow Wow Wear	Taiwan	\$32-42	?
T-Kingdom	Taiwan	\$30-65	?
Love Boat Shop	Taiwan	\$21-100	?

Danaë	Netherlands	\$38-58	Y
Design Veronique	USA	\$100-180	N
NABAY	Japan	\$105-112	?

Depending on where you live, you might also find chest binders in stock at your favorite local sex positive merchant. Another option, if you know someone who's skilled with a sewing machine, is to have a custom binder made for you, as YouTube's [sillyyetsuccinct](#) did:

Used Binders

If you can't afford a binder, don't despair! Used binders are often passed on by post-op trans men or those whose binders may no longer fit. There are a few programs available that help distribute donated second-hand binders:

- [In A Bind](#) – Started in 2012, to date In a Bind has provided safe compression garments to over 1500 youth in need. Trans* masculine and genderqueer youth living anywhere in the USA can apply to receive a free binder. In a Bind depends on donations. Recently had top surgery? Go up or down a size? Find a style that works better for you? Donate those binders you're no longer using!
- [Black Trans Advocacy FTM Binder Grant](#)
- [MORF Binder Exchange](#) – Since February 2011, MORF has been providing free binders to trans* masculine people in the UK and around the world. The free scheme (all you pay is the postage) has so far redistributed hundreds of binders. In 2014 alone, over 280 binders were sent out.
- [FTME Free Youth Binder Program](#) – Age 24 and under only; USA only.
- [Replace the Ace](#) – USA only
- [Big Brothers Used Binder Program](#) – Donation required
- [Mazzoni Center's Binder Recycling Program](#) – Only for youth enrolled in P.A.C.T.S., Philadelphia.
- [The Binder Project](#) – Monthly binder giveaways (and accepting binder donations.)
- [Point 5cc Tshirt Company](#) – Free binder with purchase of t-shirt
- [Come As You Are's Binder Bucks Recycling Program](#) – Canada only
- [Qmunity Binder Exchange](#) – BC, Canada only.
- [Trans Fellas](#)
- [Northern Ireland Binder Scheme](#) – Age 25 and under, N. Ireland only.
- [FreebieBinder Sthlm](#) – Sweden

[Trans Clothing Exchanges](#) are another place where you can often find inexpensive binders. You can also try asking around for a hand-me-down binder on one of the [mailing lists for trans guys](#) or check out [LiveJournal's FTM Garage Sale](#) and the [FtM Sales, Swap, and Support group on Facebook](#).

How to Choose a Chest Binder

If you still remember your old bra size, you can find out your binder size by using the [Bra to Chest Size Converter Tool](#). If you don't know your old bra size, you can measure yourself the old-fashioned way:

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 onto a sheet of paper.
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 differentiate your size not only from brand to brand but from binder to binder as well.

Selecting a binder brand and style can be difficult: there are so many options that it can be overwhelming! Plus, there aren't very many reviews of binders other than those about Underworks' and T-Kingdom's more popular models. After buying your binder, help make the experience easier for guys in the future by contributing your review to one of the review sites listed below.

Essentially, there are two types of binders: short ones and long ones. The short ones end right at your waist. The down side 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.

Lastly, consider the location of the company you're buying from. Buying from a company that's closer to you can save you a significant amount of money on shipping costs.

How to Put On a Chest Binder

It might seem silly, but you're probably going to need some help figuring out how to put on your new binder, particularly if you purchased one of the longer styles.

1. Put your binder inside out and upside down.
2. Step into your binder and pull the bottom of it up, ideally to your belt line. The binder should still be inside out and upside down.
3. Use the sleeves as handles to pull the top of the binder (the end closer to your feet) up to your shoulders.
4. Put your arms through the sleeve holes and adjust your chest to your needs. You may need to pull the bottom of the binder out from underneath itself if you don't want it folded under. For others, leaving it folded under may help stop the binder from rolling up.

Don't be disappointed if you look in the mirror and it looks like you have one big boob in the middle of your chest. You just need to adjust your chest. Reach in from the neck hole and push your chesticles down and out. You're basically pushing your nipple toward your armpit to achieve the flattest looking chest possible.

FTM Chest Binding Tips

Very important: When binding, you should not by any means feel as though you can't breathe or like you're going to pass out from a lack of oxygen.

Binders aren't the most comfortable things in the world. To make binding more comfortable, and to reduce the possibility of the binder moving around a bit, some guys wear a light shirt underneath.

Depending on the size of your chest, you may need to layer clothing on top of the binder to get optimal chest flattening. You'll find that some of the shirts in your closet require you to layer more than shirts in your wardrobe.

You can swim in your binder. Just wear a sleeveless or sleeved T-shirt over it. Don't worry if your binder seems less effective after a swim, this isn't permanent. Simply wash it and it will go back to normal.

Your chest will look bigger than it really is when you look down at it. Check in the mirror for a more accurate side view.

Not all binders breathe well, and the reality is that you're probably going to get hot. If you've already started testosterone, you're definitely going to sweat. The build up of sweat can irritate your skin causing rashes and sores. Wearing a thin cotton shirt that breathes well underneath your binder may help prevent this. If you find this uncomfortable, try applying corn starch to your body before putting on your binder to help keep it from holding in moisture. If you've already experienced skin irritation of some sort, take care of it the same way you would an open wound. Washing the irritated area with anti-bacterial soap will keep it clean and help it heal faster.

Conclusion

[Chest binding](#), as cumbersome as it may seem, can be very freeing for transgender men. There's a plethora of quality FTM chest binding products available for body types of all shapes and sizes. Regardless of what you use for binding, please remember to put your health first. Now that you're armed with all the information you need to find the right binder for you, go forth and feel more comfortable in your skin!

Last updated: 09/07/16

This was gratefully borrowed from <http://transguys.com/features/chest-binding>

There is a good video there about someone trying on various types and giving pros and cons plus active links to some of these resources and companies.

Bind safely!