

Caregiver Compliance: Get Better Outcomes by Optimizing TheraTogs Use at Home



If you are new to using TheraTogs, or if you have an older Full Body System that is not in use for reasons of compliance or complexity, these suggestions are intended to get you going.

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Everyone at TheraTogs, Inc. wants our products to be as easy and effective to use as possible -- especially for the caregivers who are responsible for their daily wear.

The simplified **Posture and Torso Alignment (PTA) System** is our latest effort to make TheraTogs easy-to-use. (We also enclose photographed instructions and a DVD with demonstrations of garment fitting, trimming, and donning the PTA – as well as several strapping options for improving postural alignment.) In the PTA we've reduced the system contents to *just the essentials* necessary to address sagittal plane core alignment and stability. We know that trunk alignment and control are necessary for functional limb use, and that without core stability, limb muscles are used for balance rather than function. **Address the core first, and further improvements will follow.**

Best Practice: Before the Client Shows Up...

- ❑ **Spend six minutes** viewing the garment fitting and trimming segments of the DVD that was supplied with your PTA system. You'll see how easy it is to dress the wearer in the garments!
- ❑ **Spend five minutes** looking over the illustrated instructions contained in the "Open Me First" bag. You'll see again how easy it is, and you'll be more confident in front of your client.
- ❑ Trimming and customizing your TheraTogs for a better fit **adds value** to the system. **A snug fit improves effectiveness** which in turn, improves compliance, which improves outcomes, which improves... you get the picture. A poor fit can be uncomfortable for the wearer and can compromise the influence of the straps by displacing the fabric rather than communicating the strapping forces to the body.
- ❑ **Buy yourself a pair of good fabric shears** – and use them to optimize the fit of your client's TheraTogs (and protect them from other uses, so they stay sharp).

A Few Fitting Tips & Tricks

- ❑ Trim round the corners on tabs that have straight edges to minimize their catching on clothing and curling up (as shown in Figure 3, following).
- ❑ The Hipster is designed to be worn under underwear, and if necessary, under a diaper. If diapers are changed regularly – before they become saturated – they may be worn over the Hipster. Be aware, though: the Hipster fabric will quickly wick moisture from an overloaded diaper (see product care instructions if this happens).
- ❑ Fit the Hipster waistband snugly around the torso below the ribs and above the pelvis. When you pull down on the hip panels to wrap the thigh cuffs, the pelvis must prevent the waistband from sliding down.
- ❑ If the Tank Top is applied too tightly around the trunk, the child will complain. Don't worry, the foam surface will hold the garments in place on the body if the fit is comfortably snug, so you do not need to stretch them for a tight fit.
- ❑ Use your right hand to lay the left back rib flap on the ribs, and with your left hand, draw the left front rib flap down, around, and upward to take the slack out of the fabric at the waist. Attach the rib flap banana tab to the back panel. Repeat on the right side. See that the rib flap closure tabs are positioned on the lower thorax to assure easy expansion with deep breathing, and that they are symmetrical.

Tips for Helping Caregivers to Succeed & Contribute

START WITH THE BASICS – trunk alignment and control ONLY.

- With the fitted garments on the child, **mark all tabs and garment closure points**. I usually use a fine point Sharpie® to outline the tabs on all connecting garment surfaces, and then label them – “1”, “2”, and so forth. (See Figure 3, below, for an example.)
- **Minimize Velcro aggravation.** As you remove the garments for training the caregiver, show him or her how to **move all closure tabs inside the edges** before removing the garments (Figure 1). If part of the hooked side of any tab is left uncovered, it will catch on anything in the area that is Velcro-sensitive. Use a standard paper punch to put 4 or more holes in any tabs that you struggle to remove (Fig. 3).
- **Instruct the caregiver** to dress the wearer either in the Hipster alone, or in both garments, for the first week or two. **Establish caregiver confidence** in just donning the garments correctly, even if it takes a few clinic visits.
- **Look at the clock** at the start of the caregiver’s first garment donning process and *time their effort*; it often takes less time than they think it does. Donning the Hipster and Tank Top should take no more than 4 minutes the first time. Tell the caregiver how much time the donning required, and offer assurance that the time will reduce with a little practice.
- **Set the wear schedule.** Caregivers should dress the wearer in the garments every day, as instructed. Most wearers don’t need to adjust to simply wearing the garments, and should be able to wear them all day, or as long as possible. (When introduced by the therapist, the strapping will put new muscles to work in therapy sessions.)
- **Give the caregiver** the printed “Step I” garment donning instructions, and the product care instructions to take home. Keep the DVD to review strapping application procedures.
- **Assess the garment fit at the next session(s).** “Tune” any aspects of the donning procedure as needed to assure a comfortably snug fit. You might need to make new marks with a different color Sharpie.
- **When – and only when – the caregiver is ready and willing,** add strapping for trunk alignment, using one or two straps at a time. Let the caregiver learn at her/his own pace. Go slowly. Strapping for functioning extremity alignment should be the therapist’s responsibility until a caregiver is competent and confident in donning the garments and torso-alignment strapping, and only if the caregiver expresses a willingness to do more strapping at home.

Some tips you can share for using and keeping TheraTogs organized at home:

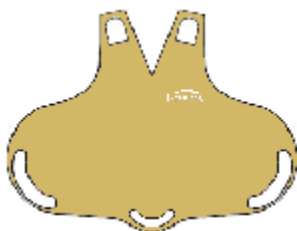


Fig. 1. Place tabs inside fabric edges when not in use to prevent the dreaded “wad-of-Velcro®” effect



Fig. 2. When caregiver is ready to start strapping, build a basic strap organizer – just clip a strip of Velcro® loop onto a common pants hanger.

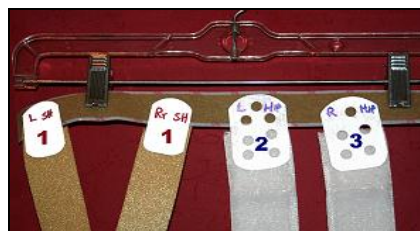


Fig. 3. When caregiver is ready to start strapping, label strap tabs (shown) to match their attachment sites on the garments.

- ✓ **If the caregiver agrees to begin using straps, mark each strap tab and its attachment site on the garment** with a color, a number, or a few letters indicating placement on the garments - e.g. “Rt-Sh” for right shoulder (Figure 3). Coach the caregiver as she/he applies the straps.
- ✓ **Provide friendly strap storage:** Cut a 16” strip of Velcro loop for mounting straps, and suggest that it be clipped to a pants hanger at home (Figure 2). Show the caregiver how to attach straps to the Velcro loop strip one at a time, from right to left, as they are removed (Figure 3). Move any unattached tabs inside the edges of the strap; this keeps the tabs from getting caught on other straps or balled up, even when transported to therapy sessions and back.
- ✓ **Review the product care instructions enclosed with each TheraTogs system** with the caregiver, emphasizing the necessity to use the **very small amount of specified detergent** if needed. Emphasize the need to rinse GoldTone fabric completely and thoroughly to rid the foamed surface of every trace of detergent.