

HISTORICAL ORTHOPAEDIC ARTEFACTS FACTSHEET No 2

The Pavlik Harness



Old and new Pavlik Harness

The Pavlik harness, named after Czech Surgeon Arnold Pavlik (1902-1965), is used in the treatment of Developmental Dysplasia of the Hip (DDH). DDH is a condition where there are varying degrees of instability of the hips. This is usually present from birth (congenital) but can also develop during

infancy or childhood. In a child less than six months of age, the reduction (correction of the hip) can easily be achieved by flexing and abducting the hips (frog position). The reduction is usually maintained using a brace such as a Pavlik harness for a period of 2-3 months.

The incidence of this condition is about 2-4 cases per 1,000 live births. Females are more frequently affected than males by 4:1. It may be present in both hips (bilateral) in 25 per cent of cases.

The Pavlik harness is made of soft fabric which is put on initially under the baby's vest, next to the skin. It has a chest strap, two shoulder straps and four leg straps which attach to little 'bootees'. The four leg straps are fastened to allow some movement in the legs, and to direct them into a position where the hips will be able to develop into a more normal position.

The baby is encouraged to rest into a position where the hips are flexed (bent) up to 90 per cent and relaxed out to the side (abducted).

Sources

1. Huxley, S. Information for patients: Pavlik harness. The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, 2014
2. Woodbine, N & Gladwin, K. Developmental dysplasia of the hip (DDH) and management with a Pavlik harness: patient information leaflet. Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, 2009