

by *Constante Quirino*



Deciding to approach your life openly with a body image you want can be intense, exciting, and terrifying, all at once. Your body doesn't define you, but it can help if your body matches your definition of yourself. [You're not alone.](#)

Compression garments, like binders, are meant to aid anyone seeking a flatter chest while still offering the support you need for your active life of school, work, and social activities. [Selecting your first binder](#) can be confusing. They're very different from undergarments you've worn before, but with a little care, you can find the right binder for you.

Be Careful with Your Compression

With these garments, there is one big thing to avoid: over compression. I get it. You're ready to rock the new bod and may be tempted to order a smaller size for more pressure, but more compression doesn't equal faster shaping. Too much compression could, however, cause injury from compressed organs, cracked ribs, and other medical issues. You're shifting to a new body you're comfortable in, so don't start your journey by making discomfort part of your life.

In fact, it may be best to choose different compression strengths for various situations. For example, the garment you wear around home could offer lower compression that will allow your body to move and give time for your muscles and bones to relax. When going out, however, you could choose a tighter option that will provide you with the shape you desire.

Be mindful that you should not wear your binder at all times. Your body needs a chance to breathe a bit in order to avoid the serious health issues mentioned above, as well as skin irritation, chronic pain, and even problems breathing.

What to Look for in a New Binder

To start with, think about your life, your current body, and what activities you pursue. There are [binders available with extra compression](#) panels for athletes who need additional securing and support, lighter weight binders for loungewear while studying, and everything in between. Understanding how much compression you need is vital to finding the binder you'll be most comfortable in.

Size it Right

Make sure to read and understand the sizing information and instructions from the manufacturer. Like other clothing, there can be variation from one company's products to the next when it comes to sizes. What feels right in your body is a very personal experience, however it can be helpful (if you're comfortable) to have a friend, [family member](#), or trusted ally help you take any needed measurements. The measurements will be more accurate if you're able to stand or sit normally, giving you [a better fit from your binder](#). The most common measurements needed are around the largest part of your chest and directly under your breasts, however other measurements may be required.

Find the Right Material and Style

Most binders are made of a nylon/spandex blend to stretch and supply compression. Some, however, are lined with cotton or a cotton-feel material. Only you'll know which will feel better against your skin. Just remember, no matter how comfortable your binder may feel, it is important to give your body a break and remove the garment regularly.

You'll also want to choose a style. While many choose a garment that's cut similar to a tank top or midriff-length tank top, some feel this is too reminiscent of a bra. Binders cut to look like regular undershirts, T-shirts, and even swimsuits are also available. Most are practically invisible under clothing, as long as your outerwear is longer than your undergarments. It's entirely a matter of comfort and preference.

Don't go all in

Start with an order of just one or two binders. This keeps you from spending too much before you have a binder to try on and ensure it fits and feels right for you. Your body is also not constant. Whether you intend to minimize your chest through hormones or surgery or you just wanting to conceal right now, your body will change with your life.

It's best to start with a few [different kinds of binders](#), then get a few more when needed. You want enough binders to at least get you from one wash day to the next. Dirty binders can harbor bacteria, which can cause unpleasant smells and possibly cause skin infections. Even if you only have one piece, removing it at night or when you're relaxing at home is a great chance to wash it.

Don't be Afraid to Reach Out

If you have any questions about a binder's cut, style, or components, a quick call to the manufacturer's customer service number will get answers. If you're still private about your gender, don't worry. They make binders for people in a broad range of situations and for all genders. Most will be happy to talk frankly with you about their products, what you can expect, and which binders might suit your needs the best.

If you need help purchasing a binder, look to [donation programs](#) that may help. Some manufactures may also set up binder donations with supporting programs, such as [F2M Binders](#).

As you embark on this journey, be patient with the process as there is a lot to figure out and remember to love who you are all along the way.

Author Bio: *Constante Quirino is a freelance writer and content strategist who has worked with a number of emerging companies as well as up-and-coming designers. A passionate yogi for several years, he is an advocate for healthy, balanced lifestyles.*