

# Pavlik Harness History & FAQ's

## **World War 2 (Late 1930s-early 1940s)**

Czech orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Arnold Pavlik, creates the Pavlik Harness and presents his early leather version at the Czechoslovak Orthopaedic Society meeting in 1946



## **Late 1800s and early 1900s:**

Infants and children with dislocated hips were treated with casts and rigid braces to hold the head of the femur (“ball”) in the acetabulum (“socket.”).

## **1950s-1980s**

Pavlik Harness is shared and accepted around the world. Softer harness materials were used and techniques for using the device were fine-tuned.

## **What was unique about the Pavlik Harness?**

Early treatment for dislocated hips included casts and rigid splints that stiffly held the hip in one position. A common complication of this rigid positioning was avascular necrosis, which is when there is decreased blood supply to the hip that results in hip damage. The Pavlik Harness was considered a “functional treatment” that allowed some movement. Dr. Pavlik felt this movement was important for healthy hip development.

## **How does the Pavlik Harness work?**

The Pavlik Harness gently holds the baby’s hips in a flexed (bent) and abducted (spread apart). This position helps keep the head of the femur (ball) in the acetabulum (socket) and can help the socket to develop properly.



**Dr. Arnold Pavlik**

## **Who can be treated with the Pavlik Harness?**

- Mostly used for infants from birth to 6 months old, but some orthopedists have reported good outcomes using the harness in infants up to 14 months old
- Infants with hip instability ranging from mild instability to subluxed (partially dislocated) and even dislocated hips may all benefit from Pavlik Harness treatment.
- Some infants with severe hip dislocations or with certain medical or developmental conditions may not be good candidates for treatment with the Pavlik Harness.

## What are some of the benefits of the Pavlik Harness?

- The baby can have some hip movement in the harness within certain ranges. This is felt to be healthy for the hip and reduce the risks of injury to the hip.
- Parents can change the baby's diaper without removing the harness. This helps with caregiving but also allows the harness to work better by reducing the number of times it needs to be put on or taken off and how often it needs to be adjusted.
- Doctors can do ultrasounds to look at the hip while the harness is on.
- Infants can continue to develop their motor milestones with the harness on. Some can even learn to crawl or walk with it on!
- The Pavlik Harness has been successfully used to treat hip dysplasia for over 75 years!



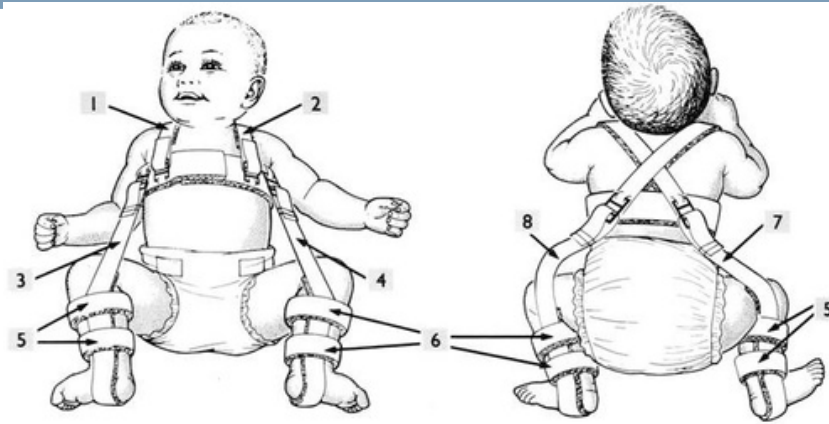
## How long does treatment with the Pavlik Harness take?

Babies will be followed by their doctor regularly while being treated with the Pavlik Harness so the doctor can monitor progress and determine how long treatment needs to last. Many babies use the Pavlik Harness full-time for a few months and then may continue to wear it at night only.



## What happens if the Pavlik Harness doesn't work?

There are lots of other treatment options including rigid braces, casts, and sometimes surgery. The doctor can discuss these treatment options so that next steps can be decided on with the patient and family.



US-based pediatric hip surgeon, Dr. Salil Upasani, presented on use of the Pavlik Harness at the 5th Annual International NYU Langone Hip Dysplasia Symposium in 2022. During this presentation.

He shared the following recommendations for doctors to have the greatest success with Pavlik Harness treatment:

- **Provide good communication and education** to caregivers about their baby's hip dysplasia diagnosis and the purpose and goals of Pavlik Harness treatment. Caregiver follow-through with keeping the harness on is key to success!
- **Have a team approach to care.** Nurses, physician assistants, and/or orthopedic technicians can provide additional caregiver education and training and support the family throughout care.
- **Educate the family on safely putting the harness on the baby** and related caregiving needs, and provide easy-to-access and follow resources. Making sure the harness is put on right is key to success!
- **Monitor the baby's developmental milestones** to make sure they are developing properly. Developmental delays may be due to another medical or developmental condition and could make Pavlik Harness treatment less successful.

## What can parents and caregivers do to help their baby have the most successful outcomes for treatment?

- **Practice putting the Pavlik Harness on your baby** at your doctor's office so you can get feedback and make sure you feel comfortable putting it on and making adjustments.
- **Follow your medical team's recommendations** for how often to have your baby in the Pavlik Harness. The baby usually wears the harness full-time or close to full-time in the beginning.
- **Attend all scheduled check-ups** so your medical team can monitor your baby's hip to make sure it is getting better.
- **If you have questions, make sure to ask your medical team!** They will be happy to answer them and support you!
- **Check out the International Hip Dysplasia Institute's page to learn tips and tricks** for caring for your baby during Pavlik Harness treatment: [Pavlik Harness Tips and Tricks](#)



## References

1. International Hip Dysplasia Institute Website
2. Mubarak, S. J., & Bialik, V. (2003). Pavlik: the man and his method. *Journal of pediatric orthopedics*, 23(3), 342–346.
3. Upasani, S. (2022, September 16). Pearls and pitfalls with the Pavlik method [Conference presentation]. Fifth International NYC Langone Hip Dysplasia Symposium: The Island of Knowledge in Hip Dysplasia, New York, NY, United States.