

## What is tucking?<sup>1</sup>

Tucking is a practice that helps create a more feminine-appearing profile. This is most often done by curving the penis between the legs toward the anus, and pushing the testicles up into the inguinal canals, the cavities through which the testicles descend from the abdomen to the outside of the body. To find your inguinal canals, start with one side of your body. Take a finger and push your testicle aside while lifting the finger up toward your body. You should hit an area of skin where your finger can push into your body just slightly. That is the entrance to your inguinal canal on that side.

When tucking, once everything is in its tucked position, some of us use medical tape to keep things in place. Duct tape can cause skin reactions and irritation. Most of us choose to shave the area where tape is used, as this makes the tape stick better and makes it more comfortable to remove the tape. Snug-fitting underwear adds an extra layer of security and creates a smoother profile. Special undergarments, known as gaffs and dance belts, can also be used to keep everything in place when tucking. Gaffs are specifically designed for this purpose, and more easily obtained online, while dance belts—designed to provide comfort and reduce the visibility of external genitalia for cisgender men—are available from many theater and dance shops.

## How to tuck<sup>2</sup>

Tucking may be mildly uncomfortable, but it shouldn't be painful. Don't force your genitals to move. If you're having difficulties or experiencing a lot of discomfort, stop. Take a break, and return later.

Practice tucking a few times when relaxed and in a comfortable space at home before going out. This can help you to avoid any panic or stress in public if it's your first time tucking.

## Supplies

The first step to tucking is to set up the supplies that you need. This includes:

- medical tape
- a snug pair of underwear

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<sup>1</sup> From *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource for the Transgender Community*, ed. Laura Erickson Schroth.

<sup>2</sup> From "[How Does Tucking Work and Is it Safe?](#)" by Kaleb Dornheim.

- a gaff, if desired, for a second layer to create a flat and smooth surface

A gaff is a piece of fabric that flattens the lower body. They're often made out of cut pantyhose, or can be purchased online or in shops that cater to LGBTQIA individuals. Pantyhose can be found in most grocery and department stores and will allow you to tailor the size of the gaff for your needs.

Some people may also use a panty liner before putting on underwear. Panty liners can be found in the feminine care section of pharmacies or stores. This section is often near the family planning section.

## **Tucking the testes**

After you've gathered your supplies, you can begin with tucking the testes. The testes will slip back up into the inguinal canals. You can use two or three fingers to guide them up to their corresponding canal. Don't rush this step. If there's any pain or discomfort, stop and try again after a short break.

Next, you can tuck the scrotum and the penis. This can be done and secured together with or without tape.

## **Securing with tape**

If you're going to use tape, you should always use medical tape instead of duct tape or any other kind of tape. That's because you don't want the adhesive to damage your skin. You should be able to find medical tape at your local pharmacy, or in the first aid section of most grocery and department stores.

If you're planning to use tape, carefully remove any hair from the area before applying tape. That way you'll avoid pulling hairs when removing it later. Removing the hair can also help you avoid pain caused by the tape pulling hairs as you move around.

Once the testes have been secured in the canals, gently wrap the scrotum around the penis and secure with medical tape. Keep one hand on the genitals to keep everything snug, and tuck your genitals back between your legs and buttocks. Finish the tucking process by pulling on a pair of tightly fitting underwear or a gaffe.

This method will make going to the bathroom more difficult because you'll need more time to remove the tape and reapply. You also run a higher risk of skin irritation. The advantage to tape is that your tuck will be more secure and less likely to come undone.

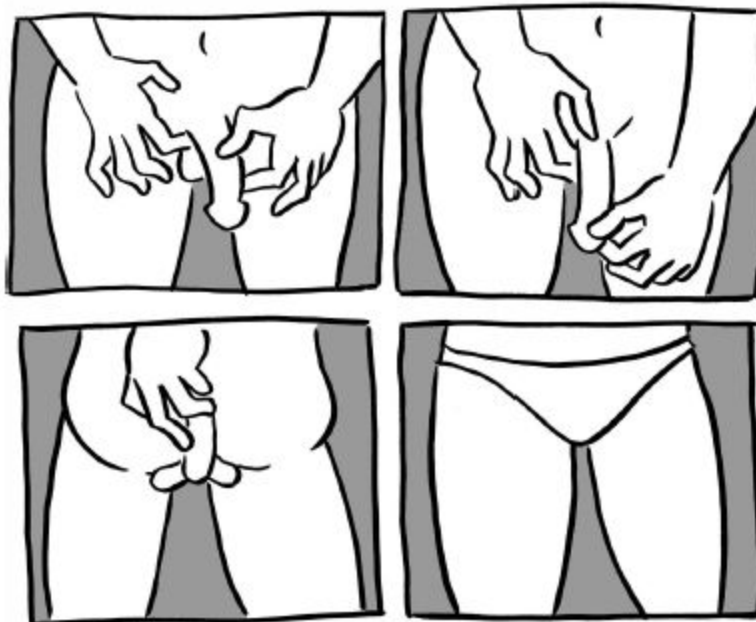
## Without tape

Tucking without tape uses a similar process, but it may not be as secure as with tape. However, you don't run the same risk of aggravating or ripping the skin when removing the tape later on.

Start by pulling on a pair of underwear or a gaff up to your knees or thighs. This will reduce your risk of losing your balance during the final securing step. It will also make it easier to secure everything in place. If this step restricts your ability to safely secure your genitals far enough back, you can skip it. Just keep your underwear or gaffe close to you so you don't have to move around a lot before everything is secure.

Next, secure the testes in the canals and then wrap the scrotum snugly around the penis. Keep one hand on the wrapped organ, and pull it back between your legs and buttocks. With your free hand, pull up the underwear or gaff and secure everything with both hands. Once you feel confident that everything is secure, you can let go.

Tucking without tape allows for easier and faster access if you need to use the restroom while tucking. You may have trouble re-securing into the same snugness after rearranging yourself, however.



Tucking (kd diamond).

## How to untuck

The same patience and care that you use to tuck must also be practiced when you untuck. If you used tape, carefully peel the tape away from the scrotum, and move the penis back to its resting position. If the tape won't come off easily and without major pain, apply a wet washcloth, or soak the area in warm water to break the adhesive. You can also use medical adhesive remover.

If you didn't use tape, use your hands to gently guide your penis and scrotum back to their original, resting positions.

## Erections and tucking

If you become aroused while tucking, you won't become untucked unless there's an issue with the medical tape, gaff, or underwear, or you weren't securely tucked before the erection began. You may need to rearrange yourself. You may also experience some discomfort and slight pain.

## Tucking and penis size

If you have a wider girth, tucking can still work for you. You may need to spend a little more time securing the tuck, however. You may also need to use a few more layers of medical tape when you secure the scrotum to the penis, or a second layer of underwear to help achieve maximum smoothness.

Be careful that you don't cut off any blood circulation in your attempts to create more layers or a flatter surface.

## Is it safe?

There's been little research published on the long-term effects of tucking. Some risks that may occur are urinary trauma, infections, and testicular complaints. You may experience some light symptoms of [chafing](#) from tucking. Always check for any open or irritated skin before and after tucking to prevent infection.

Tucking won't cause you to become sterile. You may have fertility issues if you're tucking and taking [hormone replacement therapy](#), however. Speak to your medical provider about steps you can take if you're interested in having biological children in the future and are concerned about complications from tucking.

You can avoid damaging tissue and muscle by never forcing or pulling hard on any part of your genitals while trying to tuck. You should take breaks from tucking to prevent stress on the body.

If you're concerned about tucking or the risks to your body from long-term tucking, talk to your doctor or medical provider. If you don't have immediate access to a medical provider, contact your local transgender resource center and ask if they have someone you can speak to about tucking risks and questions.

## What is a gaff?<sup>3</sup>

A gaff is, at its most basic, a pair of compression underwear. A gaff is made to be worn either [with or without a "tuck"](#) and works to help trans femme folks (or anyone else with a penis\*) achieve a flatter, more gender-affirmed look. Amongst many other things, this can help folks fit certain clothing designs (like swimwear) in a way that is more comfortable and affirming. For many trans femme folks, tucking is also important to their safety when out in public.

## What style of gaff is best?

This is based on personal preference. No matter what tucking garment you pick, if you do tuck, make sure the fabric is tight and thick enough to hold everything together discreetly, yet thin enough to feel comfortable and breathable beneath your clothing.

## How do I measure for a gaff?

Choosing the right size of gaff is just like choosing the right size of regular underwear. Measure around your waist, just above the hips, then be sure to check the seller's sizing guides to confirm the right size for you. (Don't go down a size! *Tighter is not better.*)

## What if I don't have access to/can't afford a gaff?

- A swimsuit bottom makes a good alternative for a gaff.
- You can also use panties made of tightly woven Spandex or a microfiber blend.
- Stay away from silk. Natural fibers can be "slippery" and can cause things to move once you have them in place, which can be uncomfortable.
- Cotton is a great material for breathability and price, but has a tendency to stretch out and lose its shape over time.

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<sup>3</sup> From "[Gaffs 101: Tucking Safely and Comfortably](#)," by Point of Pride.