

# CAST CARE

Casts are often used to immobilize an injured area after fractures, surgery, or injury. The cast material can be either plaster or fiberglass. Waterproof casts are available with stable fractures at a cost per roll to the patient. Casts may need to be changed before an injury is completely healed. The time period for cast immobilization depends on the injury and can range from 2 weeks to several months. As a general rule, the longer the cast is on the longer it will take to regain strength and flexibility in the affected body part.

X-rays through the cast help determine the alignment of bones involved in the injury and later to check for signs of bone healing.

Avoid getting dirt or sand in the cast because this can lead to skin abrasions and infections.

## **Itching**

Itching is common, especially during hot weather.

Avoid scratching the skin inside the cast. Scratching is more likely to injure the skin than under normal circumstances.

Do not put anything inside the cast to scratch an itchy area.

Gently tapping on the cast over the itch will sometimes help.

Using a hairdryer (with the temperature setting on cold) over the area may reduce the itchiness. Children should use with an adult.

## **Patient care**

When possible raise the body part in the cast above the heart to reduce swelling and pain. Be alert for excessive swelling in the cast.

## **Common symptoms of excessive swelling include:**

Severe and persistent pain

Change in color of the tissues outside the end of the cast. I.e. blue or gray under the nails of the fingers or toes.

Numbness or complete loss of feeling in the skin outside the end of the cast.

For a leg cast, inability to raise the big toe.

If any of these signs or symptoms occurs, contact our office or go to an emergency room as soon as possible for treatment.

## **Common signs and symptoms of infection:**

Fever greater than 101 F

Fluid leaking through the cast

## **Bathing with a cast.**

The cast must be dry at all times. Watertight cast bags are available for purchase, however, are not covered by insurance. A plastic bag taped at both ends can be used, it's best to keep the cast outside the tub.

## **What are some warning signs following splint or cast application?**

After application of a splint or cast, it is very important to elevate your injured arm or leg for 24 to 72 hours. The injured area should be elevated well above the heart. Rest and elevation greatly reduce the pain and speed the healing process by minimizing early swelling.

- Increased pain, which may be caused by swelling, and the feeling that the splint or cast is too tight
- Numbness and tingling in your hand or foot, which may be caused by too much pressure on the nerves
- Burning and stinging, which may be caused by too much pressure on the skin
- Excessive swelling below the cast, which may mean the cast is slowing your blood circulation
- Loss of active movement of toes or fingers, which requires an urgent evaluation by your doctor

## **How do you take care of your splint or cast?**

After you have adjusted to your splint or cast for a few days, it is important to keep it in good condition. This will help your recovery.

Keep your splint or cast dry. Moisture weakens plaster and damp padding next to the skin can cause irritation. Use two layers of plastic or purchase waterproof shields to keep your splint or cast dry while you shower or bathe.

Do not walk on a “walking cast” until it is completely dry and hard. It takes about one hour for fiberglass, and two to three days for plaster to become hard enough to walk on.

Keep dirt, sand, and powder away from the inside of your splint or cast.

Do not pull out the padding from your splint or cast.

Do not stick objects such as coat hangers inside the splint or cast to scratch itching skin. Do not apply powders or deodorants to itching skin. If itching persists, contact your doctor.

Do not break off rough edges of the cast or trim the cast before asking your doctor.

Inspect the skin around the cast. If your skin becomes red or raw around the cast, contact your doctor.

# **Water Proof Cast Care**

## **General Cast Care Do's and Don'ts**

### **DO**

Keep your cast clean  
Inspect the skin condition around the cast area  
File down any rough spots on the cast with an emery board  
You may shower

### **DO NOT**

Insert objects inside the cast  
Use oils, oil-based lotions, or powders near the cast  
Pull out or rearrange white cast liner  
Place additional padding inside the cast  
Break off or trim cast edges  
Engage in vigorous activity involving the cast area  
Allow the cast area skin to become sunburned soon after the cast is off  
Do not go to the beach – do not get sand down inside the cast

### **CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR IF**

You have pain or swelling  
You feel a blister or sore developing inside the cast  
You notice an unusual odor coming from the cast  
You experience numbness or persistent tingling  
Your cast becomes badly soiled  
Your cast breaks, cracks, or develops soft spots  
Your cast becomes too loose  
Your develop skin problems at the cast edges  
Your develop a fever  
Your have any questions regarding your treatment call

Inspect the cast regularly.

Contact our office for any concerns at 979-774-0411.