



Cast Care Instructions

Casts are plaster or synthetic bandages molded around injured parts of the body. They are often used when the body is recovering from:

- Broken Bones
- Sprains
- Surgery
- Joint Disorders (bunions, etc.)
- Congenital disorders (club foot, dislocated hip)

If you have never worn a cast before, you may be a bit apprehensive about how you will get around, how much of your daily routine will be affected, and how comfortable you will be. Below are some guidelines to make your adjustment to the cast a little easier.

For the first 48 hours following application of your cast:

- Elevate the casted extremity above the level of your heart.
- Apply ice packs as instructed. Cold will penetrate the cast.
- Handle your cast with care; though the cast feels firm soon after application, it takes about 48 hours for the cast to completely dry. If you must handle your cast, use the palms of your hand as any pressure can cause dents in the cast.
- Follow physicians instructions regarding weight bearing.
- Wiggle your fingers and toes frequently to improve circulation.

General Instructions:

- A cast is hard but will not withstand rough treatment, such as banging it against hard surfaces or using it as a weapon.
- Keep the cast dry, wet plaster is weak and will crumble.
- Do not slip anything under your cast in order to scratch itching skin. This could easily break the skin and lead to infection. Itching may be relieved by blowing air from a hair dryer under the cast.
- Plaster is a porous material that allows the cast to "breathe". Any coating that would close the pores would prevent needed air from circulating inside the cast, therefore do not paint your cast, felt tip pens are not harmful however.
- Maintain joint activity and muscle tone by moving your fingers or toes frequently.

Be alert for these warning signs:

- Increase pain
- Extremely cold fingers or toes
- Prolong swelling of fingers or toes
- Inability to move fingers or toes
- Unexplained fever
- An unusual odor from the cast, especially foul smelling odors
- New drainage or staining on the cast
- Numbness, tingling or a burning sensation (slight numbness is normal)
- A tight cast - A tight cast may cut off circulation to an extremity and cause permanent damage with hours. The problem may be relieved by splitting the cast without harm to a fracture.

If the above signs are present, consult your physician or hospital emergency department, as soon as possible.

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