



Caring for Your Cast: Information for Patient & Family

The purpose of splints and casts is to support and protect injured bones and soft tissue and reduce pain, swelling and muscle spasms. Here is some general information about casts, proper cast care and what to expect over the next couple of weeks. Your doctor may have very specific instructions about caring for your cast. Always follow your doctor's instructions.

SWELLING

Swelling is normal for the first 48-72 hours. Swelling may cause the casted arm or leg to feel snug or tight.

To reduce swelling:

1. Raise the casted arm or leg above heart level by propping it up on pillows or other support. If you have a broken arm, your hand should be higher than your elbow. If you have a broken leg, your foot should be higher than your knee.



2. Support the cast on pillows at night while you sleep. If you have a leg cast, raise the foot of the mattress by placing pillows or blankets under the mattress. This keeps the leg elevated during the night.
3. Move your fingers or toes frequently for the first 72 hours, then several times a day.

CARING FOR THE CAST

It is important to keep the cast in good condition. Follow these steps to help the recovery process.

1. Unless you have a waterproof cast, keep your cast dry.
2. Keep dirt, sand and powder away from the inside of the cast.
3. Do not pull out the padding from the splint or cast. The padding protects your skin.
4. If the cast causes an itch, try blowing some **cool** air from a hair dryer into the cast.
5. **NEVER** pour baby powder, lotion or oils into the cast.
6. Do **NOT** try to reach the itch with a long, pointed object such as a pencil or hanger. These objects can scratch or irritate skin and lead to an infection.
7. **NO** running, jumping, or playing sports.

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WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR OR THE CAST ROOM

If you have any of these signs and symptoms, contact your doctor's office immediately.

1. Increased pain that is not relieved with rest, elevation, and pain medication.
2. Feeling of numbness, tingling, burning or stinging around the area of the cast.
3. The cast feels tight, and the tightness does not go away after elevating it for 30 minutes.
4. Unable to wiggle or move the fingers or toes.
5. Fingers or toes are cold or turn purple or white.
6. The cast becomes damaged or cracked.
7. A fever over 101.5 degrees F in conjunction with pain and swelling.

When the injury has healed, the cast will be removed with a small specially designed saw. The saw is loud. It has a dull, round blade that vibrates. The vibration is strong enough to break apart the cast but will not hurt your skin. You will feel the vibration, but it will not hurt you. Some children often say it tickles.

Once the cast is removed, the area may look and feel different than it did before. The skin may be pale, dry or flaky, and the hair will look darker. The area around the injury may look smaller and feel weaker for a while. Depending on the type and location of your injury, the doctor may prescribe exercises to return the muscles around the broken bone back to their usual strength and size.

