

CAST CARE

Your doctor may apply a cast made of plaster, fiberglass, or a synthetic material. While you wear your cast, follow these guidelines:

DRYING

- The cast must dry completely to support your arm/leg. The cast will get lighter as it dries. A plaster arm or leg cast dries in about 24 to 48 hours
- Until the cast dries, place rubber or plastic between your cast and other items (e.g. pillow) so the items do not get wet.
- To avoid changing the shape of the cast (which could cause skin irritation or sores), be careful not to dent the cast while it's still wet.

PROTECTING YOUR CAST

- Avoid knocking your cast against any hard surface.
- To protect the foot of a leg cast from breakage, scrapes, and dirt, put a large sock or slipper sock.

CARING FOR YOUR SKIN

- Wash the skin along the cast's edges every day, using a mild soap.
- Before you begin, protect the cast's edges with plastic wrap.
- Avoid getting the cast wet.
- Dry the skin thoroughly with a towel.

RELIEVING ITCHING

- No matter how itchy the skin under your cast may feel, never try to relieve the itch by inserting a sharp or pointed object into the cast.
- This could damage your skin and lead to infection.
- Don't put powder or lotion in your cast, either, or stuff cotton or toilet tissue under the cast's edges (this may cut down on your circulation).
- Set a hand-held blow-dryer on "cool" and aim it at the problem area.

STAYING DRY

Plaster Cast

- If you have a plaster cast, you'll need to cover it with a plastic bag before you shower, swim, or go out in wet weather. You can use a garbage bag or a cast shower bag, which you can buy at a drug store or medical supply store.
- DON'T get a plaster cast wet. Moisture will weaken or even destroy it.
- If the cast gets a little wet, let it dry naturally, such as by sitting in the sun.

Fiberglass or Synthetic Cast

- Check with your doctor to find out if you may bathe, shower, or swim.
- If he does allow you to swim, he'll probably tell you to flush the cast with cool tap water after swimming in a chlorinated pool or a lake.

- Make sure that no foreign material remains trapped inside the cast.
- To dry a fiberglass or synthetic cast, first wrap the cast in a towel. Then prop it on a pad of towels to absorb any remaining water. The cast will air-dry in 3 to 4 hours; to speed drying, use a hand-held blow-dryer.

SIGNING THE CAST

- Family members and friends may sign their names or draw pictures on the cast.
- **Don't** use paint because it could make the cast nonporous and damage the skin under the painted area.

CHECKING YOUR CAST AND THE SKIN UNDER THE CAST

- You will need to check for possible problems with your casted arm/leg, such as wound drainage or severe swelling.
- Check your cast every day.
- If your cast covers a wound, it is common to have some red or reddish-brown drainage during the first 48 hours after the cast is applied. This drainage may seep through the cast or leaks out from the end of the cast. Use a pen to outline the drainage on the cast. Then watch to make sure the drainage is not increasing.
- New drainage may signal a problem

TEST SENSATION AND MOVEMENT

Several times a day:

- Check for numbness, tingling, or pain by touching the area above and below the cast.
- Wiggle your fingers or toes on the casted arm or leg.
- Look at the color of your fingers/toes.
- Press a fingernail or toenail of the casted limb until the color fades. Then let go. The normal flesh color should reappear within 3 seconds
- If your fingers or toes are cold, try covering them.

CALL THE DOCTOR IF THE DRAINAGE:

- Stains the cast or bed linens bright red.
- Occurs even though the cast wasn't applied over a wound - pressure from the cast may have caused a new sore.
- Changes in odor or color of the drainage - this may mean there is an infection.
- Spreads.

CALL THE DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY IF:

- Your skin or nails of the toes/fingers below the cast looks blue or gray.
- Normal flesh color doesn't return quickly (within 3 seconds)
- Call your doctor if you can't move your fingers or toes, or if you have more pain than usual when you move them
- If your fingers or toes do not warm up after covering them.
- Your cast gets damaged or breaks.