

Your child has just had a cast applied. This information sheet explains how to care for the cast. If the cast makes your child uncomfortable or if he or she has trouble getting used to it, call your child's doctor for advice and suggestions.

CARING FOR A CAST

- As long as your child has a cast, follow these instructions.
- Keep the cast elevated for the first 48 hours (two days). Whenever your child is resting (either sitting or lying down) keep the arm or leg that is in the cast elevated above the level of the heart. You may want to prop the cast up on some pillows.
- Be sure that the top end of the cast does not indent the skin and muscle when sitting with the cast resting with the cast supported. This may cause discoloration and swelling of the fingers or toes.
- Change the position of the arm or leg about every two hours. This keeps the cast from putting too much pressure on the skin in any area. Observe the skin under the top edge of the cast. An early sign of too much pressure is indented skin. A later sign is swollen or discolored fingers or toes.
- Check the skin around and under the cast every day for sores or red areas. Press the skin down all around the cast so you can look under the cast.
- Help your child exercise the fingers or toes of the arm or leg that is in a cast.
- If the cast becomes very dirty, clean it with a slightly damp cloth. Do not use soap. Be careful not to get the padding wet.
- Use a hair dryer to blow cool air under the cast. This may help if your child's skin is itchy. It also helps the cast to dry.
- If the itching is very bad, ask your child's doctor to prescribe or recommend some medicine to ease the discomfort.

You will need to sponge bathe your child while the cast is on. Cover the cast with a plastic bag to protect the cast during the sponge bath. Talk with your child's doctor or nurse for ideas if bathing is a problem.

BE CAREFUL NOT TO

- Wet the cast. A plaster cast will crack and crumble.
- Let the cast dip into the bathwater, even if it is in a plastic bag.
- Let your child put any objects inside the cast for any reason. This may injure skin.

WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR

Call your child's doctor immediately if:

- There is any swelling above or below the cast.
- Your child has a fever and there is a surgical incision under the cast.
- Your child says the cast feels too tight.
- There is a bad smell coming from inside the cast.
- Your child complains of pain that does not go away.
- Your child's skin becomes red or sores develop around the cast edges.

SOLVING PROBLEMS AT HOME

You may be able to solve some problems on your own. If the steps described here do not help, you will need to call the doctor.

- The fingers or toes may change color. If they become bluish or gray, reposition or elevate the cast. If there is no improvement within a few minutes, call the doctor.
- If your child's fingers or toes feel cold, reposition the cast and cover the fingers or toes. Check your child's circulation in the arm or leg that is in the cast. To check the circulation, press on a toenail or fingernail. The nail should turn white. When you let go, the nail should turn pink again right away. If the nail does not turn pink, call the doctor. If the nail does turn pink, keep the fingers or toes covered for five to 10 more minutes. If they still feel colder than the other hand or foot, call the doctor.
- Your child may notice a numb or tingling feeling. If this happens elevate the cast. If the numbness or tingling is still there 30 to 45 minutes later, call the doctor.
- If your child's cast gets damaged or broken, call the doctor. You will need to make an appointment to have it fixed or to have a new cast put on.

If you have questions or concerns about your child's cast call the doctor.



Cast problems?

**Call 832-822-3100 for the Main Campus Clinic
and Health Centers or for our
West Campus Location call 832-227-7678**