

Cast Care Guidelines

What do I need to know about caring for my cast?

It takes 24-48 hours for a cast or splint to dry completely. This may vary depending on the material it consists of. While your cast is drying:

- Keep it uncovered as much as you can.
- Raise your casted leg or arm at least 4-6 inches above the level of your heart to reduce swelling.

For casted legs: Prop two or more pillows under the calf of the casted leg. Do not rest or prop leg using the heel area. This helps prevent any skin break down within the heel region. Wiggle your toes to reduce swelling and increase circulation.

For casted arms: When you are in bed, put your arm on top of two or more pillows. If you have a sling, use it as needed for comfort. Wiggle your fingers to reduce swelling and increase circulation.

What do I need to do daily to care for my cast?

Check your fingers and toes daily. Call if you notice any of these signs or symptoms:

- Increased pain.
- Swelling that is not reduced by elevation.
- Numbness, tingling or temperature change that does not improve with elevation or position change.
- Loss of movement (wiggle your fingers or toes to check).
- Pain that is not relieved with medication.

Keep the cast dry and clean. To protect your skin from irritation, cover the edges of the cast with waterproof tape or moleskin.

This will also help prevent the edges of the cast from crumbling.

What do I need to know about skin care and my cast?

Check the skin under the edges of the cast each day. If you see persistent redness, broken skin or sores, call your doctor or the Orthopedic Clinic.

To relieve itching under the cast you can use a blow dryer on a cool setting. Blow cool air at the opening of the cast. Do not shake powder into the cast or stick any object into the cast to scratch the skin. Do not cover the cast with plastic bags for a long period of time.

What physical activities can I do with a cast?

Your provider will talk with you about any limits you may have. Check with him or her about going back to work or school. Your casted arm or leg will swell when you use it. The swelling may cause pain. To relieve the swelling, raise your arm or leg and wiggle your fingers or toes.

When do I need to call my provider?

- You have numbness, tingling, temperature or color change that does not improve with elevation or position change.
- You have an odor or unusual drainage under or through the cast.
- Your cast becomes loose, cracked, broken, wet or just feels unbearably tight without relief from elevation.

Phone Numbers

Orthopedic Clinic 608-287-2700

1 South Park St

Orthopedic Clinic 608-263-7540

The American Center

Pediatric Orthopedic Clinic 608-263-6420

Orthopedic Trauma Clinic 608-263-0333

If you have significant concerns after hours
call the Orthopedic Resident on call at:

608-262-2122

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©5/2019. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7980.