

Non-Waterproof Cast Care

There are many reasons why you may need a cast. You may need a cast to:

- Keep a body part from moving
- Help with stretching
- Help broken bones heal
- Protect you after surgery

A fiberglass cast has many advantages over the traditional plaster cast. A fiberglass cast will harden and dry quickly and is very lightweight with good strength and durability.

What You Need To Check For

Circulation (Blood flow) - Fingers/Toes below the cast should be pink.

Temperature - Fingers/Toes should be the same temperature as their opposite hand/foot.

Movement - Fingers/Toes move (wiggle) freely.

Feeling - You should be able to tell which finger or toe is being touched with your eyes closed. You should not have numbness or tingling.

Swelling - If there is swelling, lift the hand or foot higher than the heart. This should help reduce the swelling.

Odor of the cast - You should not have a foul odor or drainage coming from the cast. A "dirty sock" smell is normal.

Sharp edges - Sharp edges especially around the thumb and fingers can be trimmed back with a fingernail

clipper and sanded smooth with a nail file. Otherwise, do not alter or modify your cast in any way. Your cast is specifically made for your injury, modifying it may delay or affect the healing or your injury.

Call Your Doctor

Circulation - Fingers/Toes look pale (white), blue or red.

Feeling - Fingers/Toes are tingling.

Temperature - Fingers/Toes are much colder than the opposite hand/foot. Fever higher than 101.5 degrees and does not have other illness.

Movement - Not able to move fingers or toes below your cast.

Swelling - Swelling that increases or does not go away after lifting your hand or foot for an hour.

Odor - A bad odor or drainage.

Skin - Skin rash or sores around the cast.

Pain - Increasing pain.

Cast breakdown - Wet or broken casts.

How To Take Care Of Your Cast

Keep your cast dry - Regular cast padding is not water resistant! You need to protect the cast when you shower or take a bath. Wrap your cast in a towel and then cover it with a plastic bag. Don't put the cast under water even if it is covered

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with plastic. You can buy cast bags at a medical supply store or pharmacy. If your cast accidentally gets wet, you should dry it thoroughly with a towel and then using a hair dryer blow-dry on the cool or cold setting.

Do not pull out the cast padding. Doing this can make the cast loose and uncomfortable.

Itching - Sometimes casts can become itchy. This is because they absorb moisture from the skin. Using a hairdryer on a cool setting or vacuuming the outside of the cast with a vacuum hose can be helpful. Do not use coat-hangers, knitting needles and similar objects to scratch under the cast. This could lead to breaks in the skin and infection Benadryl is an excellent anti-itch medicine that you can buy. Call your doctor if itching persists.

Cast art - You can use permanent marker, gel pens or fabric paint to decorate or sign your cast.

Answers To Frequently Asked Questions

How is the cast taken off?

Casts are removed using a cast saw. This saw rapidly taps on the cast to break it apart in a fine line. Skin and cotton cast padding jiggle and tickle with the motion of the cast saw. The cast saw is very loud

because it has a loud vacuum attached to it. You can bring music to listen to (an iPod, MP3 player, etc.) or you can wear our headphones.

Will the cast saw cut me?

Almost everyone has heard of someone cut by a cast saw. This is usually from the older saws that had more of a "sawing" action rather than the new "tapping" action. The "tapping" action is much more comfortable and safe.

I thought the cast was supposed to keep my broken bone in place, but it moved.

The main purpose of most casts is to protect the injured limb from further injury and to keep the injured bone from moving. Because of the amount of muscle, fat and skin around a bone, it is difficult to "hold a bone in place." You get the best results when instructions about restricting activities are followed.

Why didn't they put a cast on in the Emergency Room (ER)?

Splints are used in the ER rather than casts because they allow the freshly injured arm or leg to swell. Sometimes a cast is applied under the direction of an Orthopaedic Provider.

This handout does not take the place of a discussion with your doctor. Discuss any questions or concerns you may have with your doctor.