

Discharge Instructions: Caring for Your Plaster Cast



You will be going home from the hospital with a plaster cast on your body. A cast helps your body heal by holding your injured bones or joints in place. A damaged cast can keep the injury from healing well. Take good care of your cast. If the cast becomes damaged, it may need to be replaced.

Patient information

You have a broken _____ bone.

This bone is in your _____.

Home care

Keep the cast dry. A wet cast can crumble and fall apart. To protect your cast from liquid:

- Avoid all activities that could make the cast get wet.
- Take special care to keep the cast dry when you bathe or shower. Protect it with 2 large plastic bags. Separately, close the top end of each bag with a rubber band or tape.
- Don't soak the cast in water, even if it's wrapped in plastic.
- If you must go out in rain or snow, cover the cast with waterproof clothing or plastic.
- Use a hair dryer turned to the "cool" setting to dry a cast that has become wet. Call your healthcare provider if the cast has not dried in 24 hours.

Other home care:

- Don't stick things in the cast, even to scratch your skin. Objects put in the cast may get stuck. Your skin may be cut and become infected. If your skin itches, try blowing air into the cast with a hair dryer turned to the cool setting.
- Don't cut or tear the cast.
- Cover any rough edges of the cast with cloth tape or moleskin. You can buy this at a drugstore.
- Never try to remove the cast yourself.
- Don't pick at the padding of the cast. Padding protects your skin and must be kept intact.
- Exercise all the nearby joints that are not limited in movement by the cast. If you have a long leg cast, exercise your hip joint and your toes. If you have an arm cast or splint, exercise your shoulder, elbow, thumb, and fingers.
- Raise the part of your body that is in the cast above the level of your heart. Do this as often as possible during your day. This helps reduce swelling.

Follow-up care

Make a follow-up appointment with your healthcare provider as advised.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these:

- Tingling, burning, stinging, or numbness of the injured body part
- Severe pain that is not relieved with medicine
- Cast that feels too tight or too loose
- Swelling, coldness, or blue-gray color in the fingers or toes
- Cast that is damaged, cracked, or has rough edges that hurt
- Cast that gets wet and doesn't dry within 24 hours

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