



Cast Instructions and Precautions

Your Care Instructions

Fractures can range from a small, hairline crack, to a bone or bones broken into two or more pieces. Your treatment depends on how bad the break is.

Your doctor may have put your fracture in a splint or cast to allow it to heal or to keep it stable until you see another doctor. It may take weeks or months for your fracture to heal. You can help your fracture heal with some care at home.

You heal best when you take good care of yourself. Eat a variety of healthy foods, and don't smoke.

The doctor has checked you carefully, but problems can develop later. If you notice any problems or new symptoms, get medical treatment right away.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Keep the cast or splint dry.
- Please refrain from taking any NSAIDs during the healing process as this can cause delayed healing.
- Follow the cast care instructions your doctor gives you. If you have a splint, do not take it off unless your doctor tells you to.
- Be safe with medicines. Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
 - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
 - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- Prop up your fracture up on pillows when you sit or lie down in the first few days after the injury. Keep the fracture higher than the level of your heart. This will help reduce swelling.
- Wiggle your fingers or toes often to reduce swelling and stiffness.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You are very sleepy and you have trouble waking up.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new or worse nausea or vomiting.
- You have new or worse pain.
- Your hand or fingers are cool or pale or change color.
- Your cast or splint feels too tight.
- You have tingling, weakness, or numbness in your hand or fingers.

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You do not get better as expected.
- You have problems with your cast or splint.

Basic Cast Care:

Regular Casts (non-waterproof casts) - Keep your cast dry at all times! There are no devices that are 100% effective in keeping your cast dry. If you have to take a bath or shower, please follow these instructions:

- Cover the entire cast and a little bit above with saran wrap or 2 plastic bags.
- Place a towel or washcloth around the upper portion of the cast
- Cover the entire cast with 2 plastic bags (use two in case one has a leak)
- Secure the bag at the top with tape or a rubber band
- If the cast gets moist, dry the top or bottom of the cast using a blow dryer. Use only the cool or low setting



- If the cast is soaked all the way through, it needs to be changed (call our office)

** Please note: these methods will not protect a cast in the pool or if submerged underwater.**

** Most insurance companies do not pay for unscheduled cast changes due to wet casts.**

Foreign Objects

- NEVER PUT ANYTHING INTO YOUR CAST!
- Sticking a coat hanger, ruler, etc. into the cast can scratch the skin, which could lead to an infection.
- Whatever you stick in the cast can get stuck, also causing irritation, infection, or an abscess.
- Please contact our office if you get something stuck inside your cast.

Itching

- You may use a hairdryer (cool or warm setting only) since moisture inside the cast is often a source of itching.
- Rubbing a ruler or similar object on the OUTSIDE of the cast can often stop itching as the friction on the outside of the cast mimics scratching.
- Benadryl may also stop the itching. It is available over the counter without a prescription.



Swelling – Occurs most often in the first 48-72 hours after injury. To minimize swelling and complications in your cast, follow these simple instructions:

- Raise the cast above the level of the heart.
 - Arm casts – it is important to raise your hand above the elbow to make sure it is high enough. If you raise the elbow portion on the pillows alone, the hand is likely to swell. A simple method is to lie down on your back with the arm out to your side and the fingers pointed toward the ceiling.
 - Leg casts – lie down on your back with the leg propped up on one to two pillows. The pillows should be under the calf and heel area, not just under the knee. Elevating leg casts on a stool or sitting in a recliner is not high enough.
- Wiggle the uninjured fingers or toes often (every hour for 24 hours, then every 4 hours)
- Use your sling for two weeks after injury unless you are told otherwise by your provider. The sling is to be removed for elevating your arm when you are not walking around.
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (such as Motrin or Advil) can be taken as directed on the bottle. (Discontinue if stomach pain occurs!)
- If these methods fail, your cast may need to be split down the sides to allow the swelling to resolve.