

Having a cast is generally a new experience for most people. Lucky for us, we have health professionals who are trained and ready to help. You have been placed into a cast because it is the best way to provide the constant immobilization necessary to help you heal from your injury or surgery. By taking proper care of your cast, you will help us take care of you.

As with anything new, it will take some time to adjust to your cast. Keep in mind that your provider feels your injury was severe enough to put a cast on. Follow your provider's directions regarding the appropriate level of activity during your healing process.

Adjusting to your Cast:

Swelling due to your injury may cause pressure in your cast for the first 48 to 72 hours. This may cause your injured arm or leg to feel snug in the cast. It is very important to keep the swelling down, as this will lessen the pain and help your injury to heal. To help reduce swelling:

- **Elevate.** It is very important to elevate your injured arm or leg for the first 24 to 72 hours. Prop your injured arm or leg up above your heart by putting it on pillows or some other support.
- **Exercise.** Move your uninjured, but swollen fingers or toes gently and often. Moving them often will prevent stiffness.
- **Ice.** Apply ice to the cast. Place the ice in a dry plastic bag or ice pack and loosely wrap it around the splint or cast at the level of the injury. Ice that is packed in a rigid container and touches the cast at only one point will not be effective.

Taking Care of your Cast:

Your provider will explain any restrictions on using your injured arm or leg while it is healing. You must follow your provider's instructions carefully to make sure your bone heals properly. The following information provides general guidelines only and is not a substitute for your provider's advice. It is also important to keep your cast in good condition, as this will also help your recovery.

- **Keep your cast dry.** Moisture weakens plaster and damp padding next to the skin can cause irritation. Use two layers of plastic or purchase waterproof shields to keep your cast dry while you shower or bathe.
- **Walking casts.** If you have a walking cast, your provider will inform you of this. Do not walk on a "walking" cast until it is completely dry and hard. It takes about one hour to become hard enough to walk on.
- **Avoid dirt.** Keep dirt, sand, oils, oil-based lotions and powder away from your cast.
- **Padding.** Do not pull out the padding or place additional padding in your cast.
- **Cast liner.** Do not pull out or rearrange the liner of your cast.
- **Itching.** Do not stick object, such as coat hangers, inside the cast to scratch. Do not apply powders or deodorants to itching skin. If the itching persists, contact your provider.
- **Trimming.** Do not break off any rough edges of the cast or trim the cast before first asking your provider.
- **Inspect the cast regularly.** If it breaks, becomes cracked, becomes loose, or develops soft spots, contact your provider. Also, inspect the skin condition around the cast.
- **Sunburn.** Do not sunburn the cast area soon after the removal of the cast.
- **Do not engage in vigorous activities.**

Contact your Provider if:

- You have pain or swelling that is beyond the normal*
- You experience numbness or persisting tingling*
- You feel a blister or sore developing inside the cast
- Your cast becomes badly soiled or wet
- Your cast breaks, cracks, or develops soft spots
- Your cast becomes too loose or comes off
- You develop a fever
- Have any questions regarding your treatment

* If you are unable to reach your provider, proceed to the nearest emergency department.

Questions

The CORE Institute is dedicated to your outcome. If any questions or concerns arise, please call The CORE Institute at 1.866.974.2673.

Reference: American Association of Orthopaedic Surgeons (orthoinfo.org)