



Orthopaedic Department

Plaster Cast Discharge Advice

Information for parents and carers

Introduction

It is important once your child goes home from hospital that the plaster cast is cared for correctly. A plaster cast is a medical device and must be used correctly at all times. The role of a plaster cast is to:

- To keep the arm / leg in a certain position.
or
- To protect the area that has been treated whilst it heals.

Pain

Mild pain is quite common following an injury or surgery and it may be treated with prescribed medication. Pain relief does not cure the pain but it will reduce the pain if given, especially for several days after an injury.

If your child has increasing or severe pain you must bring them to Accident and Emergency Department immediately.

Elevate your child's limb

Please keep the limb that is in the plaster cast raised above the level of your child's heart as much as possible.

If an arm is in a plaster cast

- If your child has been given a sling, always use it to keep their arm raised when moving about.
- Rest their arm on pillows when your child is sitting or lying down.
- Remove the sling when your child is sleeping.

If a leg is in a plaster cast

- The leg can be propped up on pillows when your child is resting, please keep the heel of the plaster off hard surfaces.
- Make sure your child uses the walking aids such as crutches or wheelchair, if you have been advised to do so.
- Make sure your child has been shown how to use the aids safely i.e. crutches.
- If your child is unable to use crutches or access the stairs safely, encourage your child to "bum shuffle" to go up or down the steps safely.

Possible problems

Poor blood supply or swelling in the fingers or toes may develop if elevation of the limb has not been maintained and swelling develops.

Signs and symptoms to look out for:

- The skin may look pale or blueish in colour.
- The fingers or toes are cool or hot to touch.
- Your child may say they have pins and needles or numbness.
- Your child may not be able to move their fingers or toes.

If any of the above signs or symptoms occurs raise the arm or leg above the level of your child's heart.

If the symptoms are still there after 20 minutes take your child to the nearest hospital Accident & Emergency Department.

Swelling

It is common to get some swelling of the fingers or toes around a plaster cast.

- Check if the plaster cast is not too tight and there is a gap between cast and skin.
- Encourage your child to wiggle and move their fingers and toes frequently to help the blood to circulate.

Skin Care

It is common for the skin under plaster to get itchy.

- **Do** check your child's skin every day for any areas that may seem irritated or areas your child feels is uncomfortable
- **Do not** use lotions, powders or oils under or around the plaster cast.
- **Do not push anything between the cast and the skin** as this can cause damage to the skin and lead to infection

Cast Care

Please Do

- Keep your allocated appointment at the arranged time. If you are unable to attend, please telephone 0151 252 5358 to arrange another appointment.
- Keep the plaster cast clean and dry at all times.
- Avoid hitting or bumping the cast to prevent cracks occurring.

When first applied the plaster cast usually takes 48hrs to dry completely. Allow it to dry naturally and keep it away from direct heat

Please Do Not

- Paint the cast as this will close the pores of the plaster cast.
- Make any adjustments to the plaster cast as this may affect the healing process.

Due to the INCREASED risk of developing a PRESSURE ULCER and other complications when in a plaster please attend Accident and Emergency Immediately if;

- your child is experiencing or developed **severe pain** in the affected arm or leg,
- your child complains of **experiencing a burning sensation anywhere** under the cast particularly at the heel or elbow
- you have noticed problems with **damaged skin or foul smells** coming from the cast.

If your child's plaster becomes damaged in any way

Please contact the Plaster Technician on: 0151 252 5358
Monday to Friday
Between 8:30am and 4:00 pm.

List of useful numbers to contact for information

Accident and Emergency	0151 228 4811 ext 2044 / 3623 / 3194
Outpatient Department	0151 252 5358
Plaster Room	0151 252 5754
Ward 4A	0151 252 3109

Specific Instructions for discharge

This leaflet only gives general information. You must always discuss the individual treatment of your child with the appropriate member of staff. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about your child's treatment. This information can be made available in other languages and formats if requested.

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