

CAST CARE

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

What is a cast?

Casts are used to provide support and to keep an injured arm or leg from moving so it can heal. Casts are made of plaster or fiberglass. A plaster cast looks and feels smooth. A fiberglass cast looks like a weave and feels rough on the outside, and may come in white or other colors. Half-casts, or splints, may also be used. Your caregiver will decide which type of support will be best for you.

How do I care for my cast?

Be especially careful with your cast after it is first applied. Although a cast feels hard within 10 to 15 minutes, it is not completely dry for 24 hours and can easily crack. Care for your cast as follows:

- Keep the cast dry and clean.
- Do not push or lean on the cast because it may break.
- Keep your cast lifted above the level of your heart for 48 hours to lessen the pain and swelling.
- Do not break off rough edges of the cast or trim the cast. Check with your caregiver if you think this needs to be done.
- Never remove the cast yourself. Your caregiver will remove the cast with a special tool when it is time to take the cast off.
- Keep your cast dry. Cover it with a plastic bag or wrap during bathing. Do not lower the cast into water. (Consult with your physician regarding showering with the cast on).
- If your **fiberglass cast** gets wet, dry it using a hair dryer.
- Do not push or lean on any part of your cast as it may break.

What is the proper skin care while the cast is in place?

- Check the skin around the cast every day. You may apply skin lotion to any mild areas of irritation.
- Keep dirt and sand away from the inside of your cast.
- Do not try to scratch the skin under the cast or place any object under the cast.
- Do not apply powders or deodorants to itching skin.

What do I need to report to my physician?

Although complications with a cast are unusual, report any of the following signs and symptoms to your physician:

- Damage to the cast.
- New or worsening pain.
- Increased swelling or tightness.
- The skin or nails of the toes/fingers below the cast turns blue or gray or feels cold or numb to the touch.
- New stains coming from under the cast (or any sign of bleeding).
- A fever greater than 101⁰ F.
- A foul smelling odor from the cast.

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For more Patient Fact Sheets, see the Greenwich Hospital web site at www.greenhosp.org and click on Patients & Visitors, then Patient Education.