

How to care for your plaster cast

This leaflet will inform you about the care of the cast or possible complications of having a cast on the arm or leg.

The purpose of the temporary cast is to immobilise your arm or leg until you are seen in the fracture clinic.

How to care for your plaster cast

- Allow the cast to dry naturally - Plaster of Paris requires 48 hours to dry completely. During this time do not cover with a sleeve or sock. After this time it will stand any reasonable strain
- Keep the plaster clean and dry
- Raise your limb, especially during the first few days, to reduce swelling and to prevent the cast becoming tight
- Exercise the joints not held in your cast as much as possible e.g. elbows, shoulder, knee and hip. Move fingers or toes for 5 minutes every hour. This will prevent joints becoming stiff and will help to reduce swelling.

What to avoid

- Do not let your arm or leg in a cast hang down for a long period of time, as this can increase swelling
- Do not push anything down your cast – this can cause skin damage and can result in an infection
- Do not cut your cast
- If you have a leg cast on, do not walk on it unless you have been told to do so.

Potential Risks

Please contact the Minor Injuries Unit at Victoria Central Health Centre or GP out of hours for advice if you experience any of the following in your injured limb:

- Continued coldness or white/blue discolouration of your fingers or toes - not bruising
- Pins and needles or numbness, or increasing pain in your fingers or toes
- Painful rubbing beneath your plaster cast
- Any unpleasant smell
- Continued pain despite taking regular painkillers.
- If you are unable to move your fingers or toes
- If your fingers or toes become very swollen despite continued elevation
- If your cast becomes soft, wet, broken, cracked or too loose or tight
- If an object becomes lodged in your cast.

Originator: Walk-in Centre