Cast Care Guidelines

Cast Care
It takes 24-48 hours for a cast or splint to dry all the way. This will depend on the material it made of. While the cast is drying:

- Keep it uncovered as much as you can.
- Raise your casted leg or arm at least 4-6 inches above the level of your heart. This helps to reduce swelling.

Casted Legs
Prop two or more pillows under the calf of the casted leg. **Do not** rest or prop leg using the heel area. This helps prevent any skin break down of the heel. Wiggle your toes to reduce swelling and increase blood flow.

Casted Arms
When you are in bed, put your arm on top of two or more pillows. If you have a sling, use it as needed. Wiggle your fingers to reduce swelling and increase blood flow.

Daily Care
Check your fingers and toes daily. Call if you notice any of these signs or symptoms:

- Increased pain.
- Swelling that is not reduced by raising above heart level.
- Numbness, tingling or temperature change that does not improve with raising or position change.
- Loss of movement (wiggle your fingers or toes to check).
- Pain that is not relieved with medicine.

Keep the cast dry and clean. To protect your skin from irritation, cover the edges of the cast with waterproof tape or moleskin. This will also help prevent the edges of the cast from crumbling.

Skin Care
Check the skin under the edges of the cast each day. If you see constant redness, broken skin or sores, call your doctor or the Orthopedic Clinic.

Itching

- Use a blow dryer on a **cool** setting. Blow cool air at the opening of the cast.
- **Do not** shake powder into the cast.
- **Do not** stick any object into the cast to scratch the skin.
- **Do not** cover the cast with plastic bags for a long period of time.

Activities
Your provider will talk with you about any limits you may have. Check with them about going back to work or school.

Your casted arm or leg will swell when you use it. The swelling may cause pain. To relieve the swelling, raise your arm or leg and wiggle your fingers or toes.

When to Call

- You have numbness, tingling, temperature, or color change that does not improve with raising or position change.
- You have an odor or unusual drainage under or through the cast.
- Your cast becomes loose, cracked, broken, wet or just feels terribly tight without relief from raising it.

Who to Call
Orthopedic Clinic
1 South Park Street
(608) 287-2700

Orthopedic Clinic
UW Health East Madison Hospital
(608) 263-7540

Pediatric Orthopedic Clinic
(608) 263-6420

Orthopedic Trauma Clinic
(608) 263-0333

If you have concerns after hours, please call the Orthopedic Resident on call at:
(608) 262-2122.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 5/2025. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7980.