

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Cast Care

## What is a cast?

A cast is a hard dressing made of fiberglass. It keeps bones in place until they heal. When the cast is no longer needed for healing, it is taken off.

## What does it feel like to get a cast?

- A cast is put on in a special room, called the Cast Room.
- When the cast is put on, it feels wet and very warm. It feels cooler as it dries.
- While the cast is being put on, there may be some pain. The cast must be dry before it can hold the bones in place. To help the cast dry faster, keep it open to the air. Do not cover the cast.

Until the cast is dry, rest it on a pillow, not on something hard.

Do not let your child walk on the leg with the cast until the cast is dry. It usually takes about 24 hours to completely dry.

## How long does the cast stay on?

A cast is usually on for 2 - 6 weeks. X-rays will be taken of the bone from time to time to see how it is healing. Depending on how it is healing will determine when the cast will come off. Sometimes a child's cast will need to be changed if it is not healing the way the doctors want it to.

## How to help your child stay comfortable in a cast:

Your child will probably have some swelling under the cast. A little swelling may cause pressure, but it is normal. Too much swelling may be painful. This is not OK.

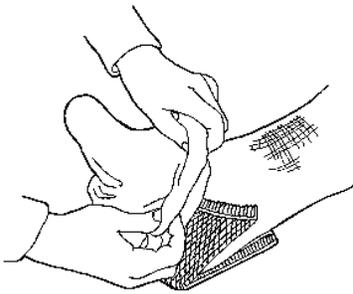
## You can help keep the swelling down if you:

- Keep your child's healing arm or leg up above the level of the heart.
- Turn every two or three hours.
- Use pillows or blankets to support the cast. Put pillows under and around your child's cast to cushion it.
- When sleeping, you may put a big sock over your child's toes to help keep them warm.

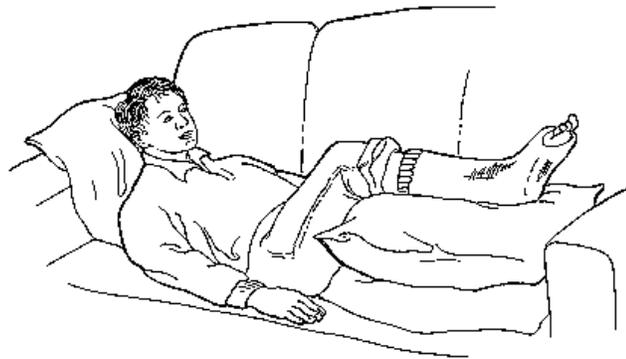


**Use pillows or blankets to support the cast.**

Make sure your child takes medicine for pain or swelling if the doctor prescribes them.



**When sleeping, you may put a big sock over your child's toes to help keep them warm.**



**Keep your child's healing arm or leg up above the level of the heart.**

## Taking care of your child's skin and cast:

- If your child's skin gets red around the edge of the cast, a little body lotion may help it feel better. Do not get lotion under the cast.
- If the cast has a rough or sharp edge, you can file it down with a metal file. If it is causing your child a lot of pain, call your child's doctor.
- If your child's skin itches under the cast, set a hair dryer on the cool setting and blow it down the cast where it itches.
- Do not try to scratch itchy skin under the cast. A scratch could get infected. Germs could grow easily under the cast.
- Do not put anything inside the cast. Things could press on the skin and cause a sore.

## Do not get the cast wet:

- If a little water splashes on the cast, let it dry in the sun or set a hair dryer on cool and blow it on the cast to dry.
- If your child's cast gets wet down to the padding, you will need to call your child's doctor.



**If your child's skin itches under the cast, set a hair dryer on cool and blow it down the cast where it itches.**

## Your child's activity:

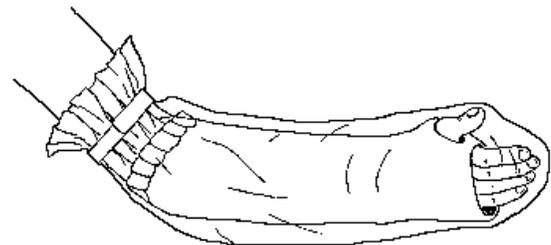
- Do not let your child run or jump until the cast is taken off. No jumping on trampolines or bounce houses.
- Do not let your child climb on anything taller than your child's knees until the cast is taken off.
- Do not let your child ride on any toys with wheels, such as a bike, scooter, or skateboard.

## Keeping the cast clean:

- Every day, wash and dry the skin around the outside of the cast.
- Clean at the edge of the cast, only as far down as your fingers fit easily.
- As you clean around the cast, check for signs of redness or sores.
- Do not let the cast get wet. Do not put the cast into water.

Your child may take a sponge bath or shower with the cast. It is important to keep the cast dry:

1. First place a towel on the top part of your child's cast.
2. Completely cover the cast with a plastic bag. The top of the plastic bag should be above the cast.
3. Tape the plastic bag to your child's skin all the way around the arm or leg to keep water from getting in.
4. Use plastic wrap (such as Saran Wrap® or Press n Seal Wrap®) around the entire cast to help keep water out.



**Tape it all the way around the arm or leg to keep water from getting in.**

- You may clean the outside of the cast with a damp cloth.
- When the cast is near the diaper area, tuck diapers around the cast so it will not get wet or soiled.
- If the cast gets wet, set a hair dryer on the cool setting and blow it on the cast to dry.



When outside, put a big sock over the cast. It will help keep dirt from getting under the cast.

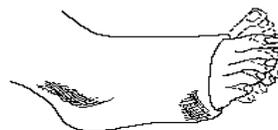
## Check your child's cast every day:

**When outside,  
put a big sock over the  
cast.**



### Call your child's doctor right away if:

- the cast gets wet down to the padding.
- the skin around the cast gets red or sore.
- the cast feels very tight or very loose.
- there is a bad smell coming from the cast.
- the cast cracks or breaks.
- the pain gets worse, especially when your child moves the fingers or toes.
- your child's fingers or toes get so swollen that your child cannot move them.
- your child's fingers or toes get numb or tingle.
- your child's fingers or toes feel cold when you touch them and do not get warm when they are covered.
- your child's fingers or toes look blue and they do not go back to normal when they are covered and warm.
- your child's fingers or toes do not fit in the cast the same way (such as the cast slips down).



**Call your child's doctor if your child's fingers or toes are hard to move, are numb or tingling, or if the pain gets worse when moving fingers or toes.**

## Getting the Cast Off:

When the bone or bones are healed, the cast can be taken off.

The cast technician (**cast tech**) uses a tool called a cast cutter to cut the cast so it can come off. The cast cutter is made so it will cut the cast, but not your child.

When the cast tech is cutting the cast, your child may feel warm or uncomfortable. This will go away when the cast tech is done.

After the cast is cut, the cast tech will cut the padding under the cast. The padding is cut with special scissors that will not cut your child.

When the cast and padding are off, your child's leg or arm will look smaller than the other one. This is normal. Your child has not used that leg or arm as much, and the muscles have gotten weak and smaller.

Your child may also have more hair on the leg or arm after wearing a cast. The hair will fall off on its own.

After the cast is off, the skin on your child's arm or leg may look different, too. That is because skin that usually flakes off was trapped under the padding. With washing and time, the skin will look normal, too.

## Now that you've read this:

- Tell your nurse or doctor how you will care for the skin around the cast. (Check when done.)
- Tell your nurse or doctor when you will call the doctor. (Check when done.)



If you have any questions or concerns,

- call your child's doctor or  call \_\_\_\_\_

If you want to know more about child health and illness,  
visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children's Hospital  
1919 East Thomas Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85016  
602-933-1400  
866-933-6459  
[www.phoenixchildrens.org](http://www.phoenixchildrens.org)  
Facebook: [facebook.com/theemilycenter](https://facebook.com/theemilycenter)  
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October 30, 2017 • Draft to expert review  
#7 • Written by Written by Vicki Curry RN and Candace Trafton RN • Updated by Meridith Garrison,  
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Development of this handout has been supported by funding from Fiesta Bowl Charities.



## Cast Care

Name of Health Care Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Date returned: \_\_\_\_\_  db

## Family Review of Handout

Health care providers: Please teach families with this handout.

Families: Please let us know what you think of this handout.

Would you say this handout is hard to read?  Yes  No

easy to read?  Yes  No

Please circle the parts of the handout that were hard to understand.

Would you say this handout is interesting to read?  Yes  No

Why or why not?

Would you do anything differently after reading  
this handout?  Yes  No

If yes, what?

After reading this handout, do you have any  
questions about the subject?  Yes  No

If yes, what?

Is there anything you don't like about the drawings?

Yes

No

If yes, what?

What changes would you make in this handout to make it better or easier to understand?

Please return your review of this handout to your nurse or doctor or send it to the address below.

The Emily Center  
Health Education Specialist  
Phoenix Children's Hospital  
1919 East Thomas Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85016-7710

602-933-1395

**Thank you for helping us!**