

Name of Child: _____ Date: _____

Spica Cast Care

What is a spica cast?

Spica is a type of bandage that holds an arm or leg in place. A spica cast is a large cast that is put on after a bone is broken or after surgery. It may cover only one leg or both legs. It keeps your child's hips and legs from moving. It keeps them in the right position for healing.

Your child's doctor will decide how long the cast will stay on your child. X-rays will show the doctor how the bone is healing. The doctor will let you know when the cast can come off.



A spica cast keeps your child's hips and legs from moving.

What about moving my child in the spica cast?

If the cast leans on your child's skin in one place too long, the pressure can cause a sore. If you move your child often, you can keep these sores from forming.

- Turn your child every 2 to 4 hours during the day and 1 to 2 times during the night if your child cannot turn or roll on their own. Set an alarm clock so you do not forget to turn your child.
- If your child has a bar between the legs, do not use it to lift or reposition your child.
- Your child may lie any way that is comfortable.
- Your child's ankles, heels, and toes should move freely.
- You may find it easier to keep your child in a crib, in bed, on a beanbag chair, or on an outdoor lounge chair.

What should my child wear with the spica cast?

Your child will be most comfortable if kept cool. Your child may not need many clothes.

- For a younger child, a T-shirt, nightshirt, or loose dress may be the only clothes your child needs. You can also use a one-piece outfit (a onesie) that is put on over the head and snaps between your child's legs.
- An older child may want to wear clothes that covers more of the cast. Your child may wear big T-shirts, boxer shorts, and loose dresses.
- If you can sew, you can fix pants, shorts, or underwear so your child can wear them. Split the seams on the sides, and sew in hook-and-loop strips (Velcro®), or snaps on the seam. When open, you can slide the clothes over the cast.

Taking care of your child's skin and cast:

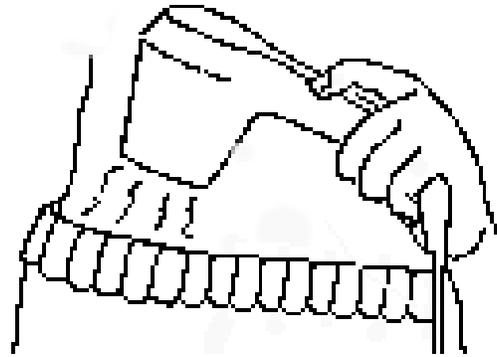
It is much easier to prevent a skin sore from pressure than to heal it. There are many things you can do from keep the cast from causing sores on your child's skin.

- 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.
- You can give your child an antihistamine (such as Benadryl®) to help with itching.
- It is normal for the cast to get a little dirty. Clean the area next the edges of the cast with a baby wipe or wash cloth.
- You can use Febreze® or a small amount of baby powder on the outside of your child's cast if there is an odor. If the odor is very strong and does not go away, call your child's doctor.
- Look at your child's skin as you wash, dry, and put lotion on it. Check all the cast edges, especially at the back and ankles. Check the feet and toes. Use a flashlight if you need more light. Look for redness, blisters, and sores. Call the doctor if your child's skin is sore.

Call the doctor if your child has pain that medicine does not help or if your child has a fever of 101°F or more for more than 24 hours.

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.



You may use a hair dryer to blow cool or cold air under the cast edges.

Keeping the cast clean:

- Every day, wash and dry the skin around the outside of the cast.
- Clean at the edge of the cast but do not clean under the cast.
- 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.

How do I change the diaper of my child in the spica cast?

You can help keep your child's skin healthy by keeping urine from soaking the cast.

- Change diapers as soon as they get wet or soiled.
- Your child's head should always be higher than the legs. This helps the urine and stool flow down, away from the cast.
- Use disposable diapers.
- Check diapers every 1 to 2 hours when your child is awake and 1 or 2 times during the night. Set an alarm clock so you do not forget to check your child's diapers.
- You may place your child on the back or stomach when you change the diaper.

To change the diaper:

1. Use a small diaper and tuck the edges inside the edges of the cast and cover your child's bottom. This diaper may be a size smaller than your child usually uses.
2. Make sure to keep the plastic of the diaper (the waterproof edges) between your child and the cast to help prevent leaks.
3. Put a larger diaper over the diaper that is already tucked into the cast. For a larger child, you may use an adult pad for incontinence (such as Poise® or Serenity®).
4. Close the diaper tabs around the waist of the cast.



**Tuck the edges
of the diaper inside
the edges of the cast.**

How do I help my child use a bedpan or urinal in a spica cast?

If your child is toilet trained, he or she can use a bedpan or urinal.

- When your child's head is higher than his or her feet, it is easier to toilet.
- A girl can use a urinal if you hold it firmly against her body.
- After your child uses the bedpan or urinal, clean and dry your child's bottom. Make sure the sheets and your child's clothing are clean and dry, too.

Should I feed my child any differently?

Because the cast covers your child's belly, your child may be more comfortable eating several small meals throughout the day. Your child may find it easiest to eat by lying on his or her stomach, with a pillow holding the chest up and your child looking down on the plate.

Because your child cannot be very active in the spica cast, he or she may be more likely to get hard, dry stool (constipation). You can prevent this by giving your child lots of fluids to drink and feeding foods high in fiber, like fruits, vegetables, and whole grain cereals and breads.

If you want to learn more, ask your nurse or doctor for the handout, **Constipation, #8.**

What can my child do in the spica cast?

Your child can do anything that does not include standing or walking or anything that may make the cast wet or break the cast. Your child can play with toys, make crafts, and play board games with other children. Your child can do school work, read, or watch television. Make sure things are placed so your child can reach them easily. If your child will be in the spica cast while school is in session, ask the school how your child can learn while at home.

Always keep your child in a safe place where he or she cannot roll off or fall. Some children learn how to turn themselves over, push themselves across the floor, or stand in the cast. Do not let your child stand or walk in the spica cast.

How can my child travel when in a spica cast?

A small child in a spica cast can be moved in a wagon or stroller. Use pillows and a seat belt to keep the child comfortable and safe.

An older child or teen can move around in a wheelchair that can recline.

You can also travel in the car with an adaptive car seat or special seat belt, depending on the age and size of your child. You will get this after your child has surgery.

What do I look for to make sure everything is all right?

At breakfast, lunch, dinner time, and before bed:

- Check to make sure the blood is flowing well to your child's feet. Press your child's toenail until the nailbed turns white. Let go. The nailbed should turn pink again within 2 seconds. Do this on the other foot, too. Toes should always be pink and warm to the touch.
- When you touch all sides of your child's toes, your child should feel it.
- Your child should be able to wiggle the toes as well as he or she could have before casting.
- If the blood is not flowing well to your child's feet, they may be cooler than they should be or your child may complain of numbness or tingling. If you find any of these problems, change your child's position to help the blood flow better. If this does not fix the problem, call your child's doctor.

How can I keep my child safe in the spica cast?

- If possible, keep your child on the first floor at street-level in case of fire. You may move your child's bed so your child can sleep downstairs until the cast is off.
- Keep side rails up on cribs.
- Use safety belts on strollers and highchairs.
- Use a bib or T-shirt to keep small things, like coins, crumbs, or parts of toys from getting under the cast.



When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor right away if:

- the toes are cold to the touch or look pale or blue.
- the toes get very swollen.
- your child cannot move toes.
- your child complains of tingling or numbness of toes.
- your child has a fever over 101° F or throws up for more than 24 hours.
- the cast does not fit the way it used to or it slips.
- a bad smell comes from the cast.
- your child has pain that does not get better with change of position or pain medicine.
- your child complains the cast hurts or burns.
- your child is always fussy, will not calm down, and you cannot tell why.
- the skin near the edges of the cast gets red, sore, or forms blisters.
- something falls into the cast and gets stuck there.
- the cast breaks, cracks, or gets soft.

Now that you've read this:

- Tell your nurse or doctor how you will care for your child's skin around the spica cast. (Check when done.)
- Tell your nurse or doctor why it is important to keep the cast clean and dry, and how you will do this. (Check when done.)
- Show your nurse or doctor how you will move your child with the spica cast, and how you use pillows and towels to keep pressure off the skin. (Check when done.)
- Show your nurse or doctor how you will change your child's diaper, or help your child use a bedpan and urinal. (Check when done.)

- Tell your nurse or doctor what you need to check for, how, and when you will call the doctor. (Check when done.)
- Tell your nurse or doctor when you will bring your child back to the doctor's office for a follow-up visit, and why. (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
Facebook: [facebook.com/theemilycenter](https://www.facebook.com/theemilycenter)
Twitter: @emilycenter

Disclaimer

The information provided at this site is intended to be general information, and is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of examination, treatment, or consultation with a physician. Phoenix Children's Hospital urges you to contact your physician with any questions you may have about a medical condition.

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#788 • Written by Vicki Curry RN and Candace Trafton RN • Updated by Meridith Garrison, BSN, CPEN
Illustrated by Dennis Swain and Irene Takamizu

Spica 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!