

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW: CAST CARE



When your child or youth breaks a bone, they often need to have a cast put on to hold the bones in proper position while they heal. Casts are also helpful for reducing pain during the healing process. Casts are custom- made for every single child and youth who visits CHEO. It's important that you follow these general instructions carefully so you can learn how to properly care for your cast.

At CHEO, our clinics provide plaster casts free of charge. However, you may wish to purchase a fibreglass cast (the ones that come in fun colours).

Whether you purchase a fibreglass cast or not, the treatment and outcome will be the same. We typically recommend fibreglass casts because they are more durable, and lighter.

### Cast care 101

#### Bathing

Even the smallest amount of water can weaken the cast, or cause skin irritation. Carefully follow these bathing instructions to keep the cast as dry as possible:

1. Wrap a towel around the cast.
2. Cover the towel with a large plastic bag and then use tape to close the open end of the bag so no water can get inside.
3. Hold the arm or leg outside the tub or shower.

If the cast gets completely soaked and you have already been seen in the C4 clinic, call us at 613-737-7600 ext. 2405. We will give you another appointment to have the cast changed. If the cast gets wet on an evening or weekend, you don't need to visit the Emergency Department. Call the plaster and cast clinic as soon as it reopens on Monday morning.

If the cast gets completely soaked and you have not been seen in clinic C4 yet please return to the ED to have a new cast put on.

#### Keeping the cast clean

To keep the area clean and prevent infection, avoid activities that would expose your child's cast to dirt and sand.

#### Walking casts

Remember! A cast is only a walking cast once you have a cast shoe (one for indoors and one for outdoors). These prevent the bottom of the cast from breaking down. You can buy these at CHEO's

KidCare Pharmacy or modify an oversized shoe (Crocs, sandals or running shoes with parts cut out). In the winter, you can use a larger winter boot and remove the lining.

Have you had a pin removed?

- Leave the dressing on for two days.
- In two days, you may have a shower. Avoid bathing in the tub for seven days.
- In one week after the pin is removed, you may have a tub bath.

### Keeping your child or youth comfortable

#### Itchiness

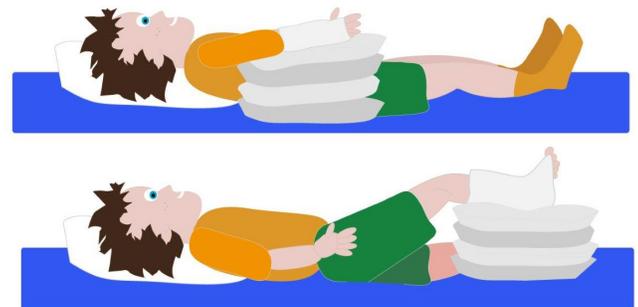
Never stick anything under the cast. This can create pressure sores by pushing all the cotton to one spot. It could also cut the skin under the cast or cause an infection.

- Tap on the cast to create vibration to scratch the itch.
- Blow air under the cast using a fan or hair dryer set to the cool setting.
- Place a frozen gel pack or bag of frozen peas on the outside of the cast. After about 15 minutes the cold will begin to seep through and relieve the itch. Avoid using ice as this will get the cast wet.

#### Elevation

The cast may feel tight for the first day or two while the padding under the cast flattens out. Raise the arm or leg above the heart if you notice swelling, numbness or feel 'pins and needles'. You can rest the limb on a pillow or two. Wiggling fingers or toes can help too.

Remember: please bring your child's crutches to all clinic appointments.



#### Contact information

A lot of problems pertaining to your child or youth's cast can be solved over the phone. Please call if you have questions.

Plaster and cast clinic "Body Shop": 613-737-7600 ext. 2405  
(for any cast-related questions)  
Monday-Friday 8:00 am- 4:00 pm

Orthopedic clinic: 613-737-7600 ext. 2407  
(for any other questions)  
Monday-Friday 8:00 am- 4:00 pm

#### When to come back to the Emergency Department (ED)

You need to come back to the ED if your child or youth:



- has blue, cold or very swollen fingers or toes
- cannot move their fingers or toes
- has numbness, "pins and needles" or feels the injured area is "falling asleep"
- has pain that is getting worse and doesn't get better with medication
- tells you the cast feels too tight