

Patient information factsheet

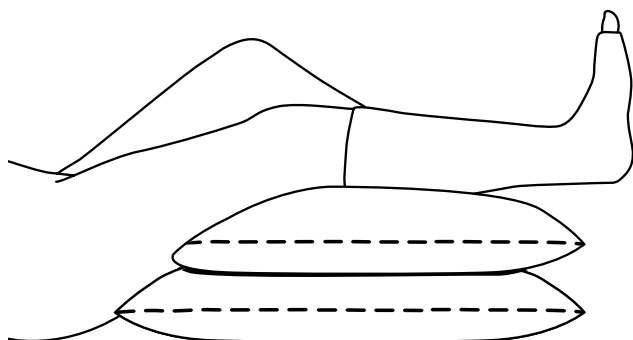
Caring for your cast

This factsheet will advise you on how to best look after your plaster cast and when to seek help if you experience any problems.

Elevation

It's important to elevate the affected limb as much as possible. Keep it up on two or more pillows turned lengthways in order to support your whole leg from hip to ankle. The plaster may feel tight for a short while after it's first applied, and elevating the limb can usually relieve this. The image below shows the correct way to elevate your leg.

It is important to keep your heel free from pressure at all times.



General advice

- Inspect your cast regularly. Check it fits correctly and look out for any signs of cracking, rubbing, any discharge or a bad smell coming from it which could be sign of an infection rather than sweat.
- If your cast is on your lower limb (leg) – make sure you keep your foot higher than your hip to reduce swelling.
- Pressure damage (pressure ulcers and sores) under a cast may be felt as a burning or itching sensation. To avoid pressure damage, you should keep the pressure off of your heel at all times and use pillows to support the affected limb, and remember to change position as often as you can.
- You can only walk on your cast if you have been given a cast sandal, and you must wait for the cast to dry completely before you walk on it. This takes two to three days for plaster of Paris casts and one hour for synthetic casts.
- It's important to keep moving all of your joints that aren't covered by the cast, especially your fingers, toes, elbows and shoulders.

Contact the hospital on the numbers over the page if you experience any of the following:

- your fingers or toes become swollen, blue, numb or difficult to move
- the cast cracks, becomes too loose or too tight or in any way uncomfortable
- you have severe pain which feels worse than the original injury

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What not to do

- Don't get your cast wet or use plastic bags, bin liners or cling film to keep a cast dry. They do not work. Special covers can be purchased, ask staff for details. Alternatively, wrap a towel around the cast and keep it well away from the water when you wash or bathe.
- Don't cut the cast if it's rubbing or causing discomfort - contact us for help on one of the numbers below.
- Don't put anything down your cast to scratch as it could cause an infection if there is any broken skin under the cast.
- Don't heat your cast to dry it quicker.

Plaster room contact details

Southampton General Hospital: **023 8120 4852**
(Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm, Friday 8.30am to 2pm)

Royal South Hants Hospital: **023 8054 0237**
(Monday to Thursday 9am to 5pm)

Where to seek help if you have an emergency

Outside of normal opening hours: Emergency department: **023 8120 6220**

General appointment enquiries

Adult: **023 8120 6218**

Child: **023 8120 8204**

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone **023 8120 4688 for help.**