



Patient & Family Guide
2018

Taking Care of Your Cast

Aussi disponible en français :
Comment prendre soin de votre plâtre (FF85-1108)



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Taking Care of Your Cast

This pamphlet explains how to take care of your cast. If your cast gets wet, call the Clinic (where you had your cast put on) right away. Wet casts can cause sores and skin breakdown. If your cast is only slightly damp (from sweat or a few drops of water), it can be dried completely with a blow dryer on a cool setting. This may take about 30 minutes.

Fibreglass casts

- Smooth over rough edges on your fibreglass cast with a fingernail file.
- If the doctor says you can walk on your cast, you may put weight on your casted leg 30 minutes after the cast is applied, or as told by your doctor. A cast shoe should always be used when walking on your fibreglass cast.

Plaster casts

- If the doctor says you can walk on your cast, you must wait 48 hours for the plaster to dry first. **Do not put weight on your plaster cast for 48 hours after it is applied.**
- Place your wet cast on a pillow or soft pad while it is drying for the first 48 hours. Hard surfaces may dent the wet plaster.

All casts

- After your cast has been put on, make sure to raise your cast above your heart for the first 12 hours. This will help reduce swelling.
- Move your fingers and toes of your casted limb often to prevent swelling or stiffness.
- Do not use anything to scratch under your cast, as this may cause a sore or infection.
- Do not stuff anything inside your cast (including cotton or toilet paper). This may cause pressure areas, sores, or an infection.
- Do not remove the padding from your cast. This could cause serious scrapes or blisters.
- Do not try to shorten or loosen your cast as the alignment of your fractured limb could shift.
- If you are given a shoe for your cast, wear it whenever you are walking. If you don't wear the shoe for your cast, even for short periods of time, your cast can crack and soften.

What are your questions?

Please ask. We are here to help you.

Keep your cast dry!

- When you shower, use a sealed shower cover (which you can buy at any drugstore). Another option is to use 2 plastic bags and a small hand towel. Put the hand towel under the first bag over the open edge of your cast and use tape to hold it in place. Cover everything again with the second bag and secure it with tape. If any water gets under the top bag, the hand towel will absorb the water and prevent the cast from getting wet. **Do not submerge (place below) your cast in water even when it is covered.**
- Do not try to clean your cast with anything wet.
- If you need to walk in the rain or snow, protect your cast with a plastic or waterproof covering or a covered cast shoe, and use your crutches.

For leg casts (fibreglass or plaster): Always bring your crutches or a wheelchair to each appointment. It is important that you return for your scheduled appointment. **If you can't come to your appointment, please call the Clinic.**

Call your orthopedic doctor's office if you have any concerns, but especially if:

- Your cast feels too loose or gets broken or cracked.
- You feel painful pressure or rubbing under your cast.
- You have pain that is not helped by the medication your doctor has prescribed.
- You have a lot of swelling, tingling, pain, or numbness in your fingers or toes which is not helped by raising them up above your heart level for 20 minutes.
- There is a bad smell from your cast that doesn't go away. (The smell of sweat from your cast is normal.)
- You notice extremely red skin, bleeding, or draining sores around the edges of your cast.
- Your temperature goes above 38.5°C (101.3°F).
- Your fingers or toes have turned bluish/purple or white and normal colour does not return when they're raised up above your heart level for 15 minutes.

Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientGuides>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

Nova Scotia Health Authority promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.

Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.

If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.