



**University  
Hospitals Sussex**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Taking care of your plaster cast

Accident and emergency

Patient information

## How should I care for my plaster cast?

A plaster cast is made of a bandage and a hard covering (usually plaster of paris). It helps broken bones in the arm or leg heal by holding them in place. You will need to keep the cast on for 4 to 12 weeks, depending on your injury.

Taking good care of your cast is important for a smooth recovery.

### Tips for cast care

- **Keep your limb elevated (raised up):** for the first few days, rest your arm or leg on a pillow. This helps reduce swelling and allows the cast to dry properly.
- **Avoid getting your cast wet:** wetting your cast can weaken it and stop it from properly supporting your bone.
- **Waterproof protectors:** talk to your healthcare provider about using waterproof covers if needed.
- **Itchy skin:** if your skin gets itchy under the cast, do not try to scratch it with objects, as this can cause sores. The itchiness should go away after a few days.
- **Exercise your joints:** move any joints not covered by the cast (like your elbow, knee, fingers, or toes) to help improve circulation.
- **Avoid irritants:** keep small objects, powders, and sprays away from your cast to prevent skin irritation.
- **Do not adjust the cast:** never try to change the length or position of your cast.
- **Limit activities:** do not lift heavy objects or drive until the cast is removed.

- **Use crutches or a sling:** if advised by your healthcare provider, use crutches or a sling.
- **Manage pain:** consider using painkillers if you experience discomfort.

## When to seek help

**Go to your local A&E if you notice any of these problems:**

- The cast still feels too tight after you have kept it elevated for 24 hours.
- Your fingers or toes on the affected limb are swollen, tingly, painful (even after taking painkillers), or numb.
- Your fingers or toes turn blue or white.
- Your cast feels loose.
- Your cast is broken or cracked.
- The skin under or around the edge of the cast feels sore.
- There is an unpleasant smell or discharge from the cast.

## Be aware

Because you are keeping your leg immobile (still), you are at risk of a blood clot (DVT). To reduce this risk, elevate (raise) your leg and do any recommended exercises.

If your injury puts you at a higher risk for a blood clot (DVT), your healthcare provider will discuss this with you and explain the steps to manage it.

## Further support

For general medical advice please use the NHS website, the **NHS 111** service, walk-in-centres, or your GP.

The **NHS website** [www.nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk) provides online health information and guidance.

There are walk-in and urgent treatment services at Brighton Station, Crawley Urgent Treatment Centre, Lewes Victoria Hospital, Horsham Minor Injuries Unit and Bognor Regis War Memorial Hospital.

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This information is intended for patients receiving care in Brighton & Hove or Haywards Heath.

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