

Plaster cast problems:

You should go to your local hospital's Accident and Emergency (A&E) department if:

- Your plaster cast still feels too tight after keeping it elevated for 24 hours
- Your fingers or toes on the affected limb feel swollen, tingly, painful (following the use of painkillers) or numb
- Your fingers or toes turn blue or white
- Your cast feels too loose
- Your cast is broken or cracked
- The skin underneath or around the edge of your cast feels sore
- There is an unpleasant smell or discharge from your cast
- A blood clot (DVT) may form due to enforced immobility of a leg plaster. Elevation and exercise can reduce this risk.

However, if your injury has placed you in a higher risk group for developing a DVT (blood clot) which could potentially have serious effects, this will be discussed with you by the healthcare professional who is looking after you.

General support

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

NHS website provides online health information and guidance www.nhs.uk

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.

We are committed to making our publications as accessible as possible. If you need this document in an alternative format, for example, large print, Braille or a language other than English, please contact the Communications Office by emailing Communications@wsht.nhs.uk

This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care in Brighton & Hove, Haywards Heath, Shoreham, Worthing or Chichester

© University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust Disclaimer: The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

Reference no. 2170
Publication date: 02/2023
Review date: 02/2026



Taking care of your plaster cast

Advice for patients seen in the Emergency Department

How should I care for my plaster cast?

Plaster casts are made up of a bandage and a hard covering (usually plaster of Paris). They allow broken bones in the arm or leg to heal by holding them in place, and usually need to stay on for between 4 to 12 weeks.

Taking good care of your cast will help ensure a better recovery

Plaster cast care advice:

- Keep your arm or leg raised on a soft surface - such as a pillow - for as long as possible in the first few days. This will help any swelling to go down and will help the cast dry correctly.
- Don't get your plaster cast wet. This will weaken it, and your bone will no longer be properly supported.
- You can discuss the use of waterproof protectors with the healthcare professional who consults with you or the plaster technicians.
- If the plaster cast makes your skin feel very itchy, don't be tempted to poke anything underneath it in order to scratch the skin, as this could cause a nasty sore. The itchiness should settle down after a few days.

More plaster cast tips:

- Exercise any joints that aren't covered by the cast - such as your elbow, knee, fingers or toes - to help improve your circulation.
- Avoid getting small objects, powders and sprays inside your cast, as they could irritate your skin.
- Don't try to alter the length or position of your cast.
- Don't lift anything heavy or drive until the cast has been removed.
- Please use crutches or a sling, if advised by your healthcare professional.
- Please consider the use of painkillers if you experience any pain.