

Emergency Department Fractures/Cast Care

General Information

Fractures are breaks in bones. A minor fracture usually heals in 4–6 weeks. A more serious fracture may need surgery. A cast or splint is used to protect and keep your injured bone from moving. The length of time the cast or splint will be on depends on how much time is needed for the bone to heal.

Types of Casts

Plaster casts mold to your body well, but will take at least 24 hours to dry completely.

Fiberglass casts dry more quickly and are stronger.

Splints are often like half casts. They are often used initially while you have a lot of swelling around your injury. When the swelling goes down, the doctor may replace the splint with a full cast. You will probably feel a warming over your injury, as the cast dries.

Care of Your Cast

- Keep the cast dry.
- If you have a bath or shower, wrap your cast with a towel and then cover it with a plastic bag. Tape the open end of the bag to prevent water from getting in.
- Do not put pressure on any part of the cast for at least 24 hours.
- If the cast gets wet or gets soft or cracked, you should see your doctor.
- Do not trim or re-shape or remove your own cast.

Care of the Injury

- To lessen swelling keep the injured limb elevated as much as possible in the first few days after the injury.
- For pain and swelling take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) as directed by the doctor.
- If you have a leg cast, sit or lie down and put pillows under your leg for elevation. If you have a footstool, use it to raise your leg.
- If you have an arm cast, use a sling when walking around.
- While resting put your arm cast on a pillow laid on your chest.

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- Do not walk on a “walking cast” until it is hard and dry. This will take 3 days with a plaster cast.
- Do not put any objects under the cast to scratch itchy skin. You could cause an infection if the skin is broken.
- Do not put any powders or lotions under the cast to relieve the itchiness.
- Itching can be helped by putting cool air from a hair dryer near the inside edge of the cast.
- Avoid hitting your cast against hard surfaces
- Wiggle your fingers or toes often, unless told not to by your doctor.

Call your Doctor or Return to Emergency if any of the following develop

- Your pain remains severe or increases.
- Your skin or nails below the injury turn blue or grey and feels cold or numb.
- Your cast feels too tight.
- You have numbness or tingling in your hand or foot.
- Your cast gets damaged or breaks.
- There are new stains coming from under the cast.
- You have a fever of 38°C or higher.

Imaging done while you were in the Emergency Department will be reviewed by a doctor in the hospital and initial results will be shared with you before you leave. A doctor specializing in reading images (a Radiologist) will review those same images within a few days of your visit and will send a final written report to the doctor who ordered them and to your family doctor to share with you.

For more information or questions contact HealthLinkBC at 811.