

Plaster cast

The Accident & Emergency Department or the Plaster room have fitted you with a plaster cast. This leaflet provides you with information about how to care for this plaster cast. These instructions apply to both adults and children. Please note that your personal situation may vary from the information in this leaflet.

Plaster cast

A plaster cast ensures that the body part is rested and can move as little as possible. In the case of a fracture the plaster cast will ensure that the bones remain in the correct position and are able to heal. A plaster cast may also be used for muscle and tendon injuries.

Types of plaster cast

There are two types of plaster cast: a *splint* or a *synthetic plaster cast*. The plaster cast may be around your arm or your leg. The plaster cast technician, doctor or nurse will provide instructions about how much pressure you can put on your arm or leg. You may be given a sling or elbow crutches to reduce pressure on your arm or leg, if necessary.

Keeping dry

Do not allow the plaster cast to get wet, despite the fact that synthetic material can withstand moisture. If the plaster cast becomes wet the bandage layers and the cotton wool will soak up the water, making the skin go soft and become sore.

There are shower bags available at the A&E unit and the plaster room, for use in the shower.



Swelling

Swelling and bruising mainly occur during the first days or first week. To prevent or reduce swelling it is important to follow the following instructions and do the exercises.

Instructions for arm in plaster

- Wear a sling during the day, so that the hand is elevated above the elbow and above the heart area.
- Do not wear any rings.
- Constantly exercise the fingers. At night remove arm from the sling and place on a pillow.



Instructions for leg in plaster

- The ankle should be elevated above the heart area (ankle higher than the knee, the knee higher than the hip).
- If you are allowed to walk on crutches, you must find a balance between elevating and walking on crutches.



Exercises

Try to do the following exercises a few times a day.

Exercises for an arm in plaster

- Make a fist and then stretch the fingers completely.
- Rotate the upper arm/shoulder, as if you are grinding coffee or stirring in a pan.
- If the elbow is not in plaster, stretch and bend the elbow.



Exercises for a leg in plaster

- Move the toes regularly
- Whilst seated raise the stretched leg ten centimeters 10x in ten seconds.
- If the knee is not in plaster, bend and stretch the knee.



Pain

If you are experiencing pain, you may use paracetamol 500 mg, up to a maximum of 3000 mg per day, unless there are any medical objections. Children need to be given the children's dosage. If the doctor has prescribed differently, you must follow that prescription.

Itching

Itching is caused by moisture between the skin and the plaster bandage. You can use the cold setting of a hair dryer to cure this. There are special sprays available at chemists and pharmacies of which you can spray a dose into the plaster cast. Do not use knitting needles or other items! These cause injuries to the skin.

Extra instructions for walking plaster

A plaster cast on your leg may be in the form of a *walking plaster*. This means that the plaster cast has a sole underneath. If you have a walking plaster and you may put pressure on it fully, you must realise that normal walking is not always possible. Indoors you may be able to move around to a certain extent, possible with a crutch. Outdoors it is often very handy to use one or two crutches. Walking may agitate the leg, causing swelling. Try to walk in a balanced way and elevate.

Prevent thrombosis

Depending on the diagnosis, treatment or type of plaster, the doctor may prescribe injections (blood thinners) in order to prevent thrombosis.

You inject these into your skin yourself, or a district nurse may assist you.

Air travel with a plaster cast

Airline companies have set requirements for people flying with a plaster cast. If you plan to fly when you have a plaster cast, please contact the airline company and check their requirements. This will avoid you being turned away at the airport.

Please contact the plaster cast technician as soon as possible to check about appointments and/or treatment.

Checkup

The outpatient clinic will have provided you with an appointment for a plaster cast checkup.

End of treatment

Once the plaster cast is removed, you must bear in mind that your arm or leg may not yet function the same as before your injury. You will be limited in your movement.

Your arm or leg may also show some swelling. Usually you will be provided with an elastic sock to wear during the day in the initial period. Do not wear the sock at night. It varies per person how long the sock is worn.

Do not forget to bring shoes when your leg plaster is removed.

Contact

Contact us by telephone if, despite the instructions in this folder, you should experience any of the following:

- Your fingers or toes are tingling, feel numb, swell up or have a very dark colour
- You can hardly move your fingers or toes.
- The plaster is causing pain or is very tight.
- The plaster is broken. If you have walking plaster, do not put any pressure on your leg.
- The plaster is wet and is not working anymore.
- You are not clear about your treatment or facilities.

Availability

Please telephone the A&E department in case of:

- Problems with plaster and/or symptoms within 24 hours after treatment at A&E Department
- Emergency cases.

The A&E Department's telephone number is 020 - 755 6560. The A&E unit is available seven days a week between 8.00 and 22.00 hours.

In emergency cases between 22.00 and 8.00 hours you can phone the hospital's general number 020 - 755 7000.

For appointments at the plaster room telephone 020 - 755 7120 (Treatment Center) In all other cases telephone 020 - 755 6115 (Plaster room); available Monday to Friday from 8.30 until 16.30 hours.