



Cast/Splint Care Instructions

TREATMENT IS THE KEY:

Some swelling after an injury is expected — it is your body's normal, natural response. This being said, too much swelling is uncomfortable.

REST: Rest enables your body to devote more energy to healing and decreases swelling and pain.

ICE: Ice is a natural anesthetic that helps control pain, swelling and bruising. Apply ice packs over the injured area for 20 to 30 minutes, several times a day while awake, for the first 24 - 48 hours. Place a towel between the ice pack and skin to prevent cold injury and between the ice and cast/splint to keep it dry.

IMMOBILIZATION: Immobilization with a cast or splint is necessary for a variety of orthopedic injuries such as sprains, fractures or post operatively. Immobilization is done to protect the injury, prevent further injury and will also help reduce pain.

ELEVATION: Raising the injured part above the level of the heart uses gravity to help decrease excess fluid, thereby reducing swelling and pain. Use pillows or blankets to prop up the cast or splint. Elevation should generally continue for 36 hours or longer if your doctor instructs.

MOVEMENT: Movement stimulates circulation, helps to maintain muscle tone and to avoid stiffness. Frequently move or wiggle the uninjured joints of the affected extremity. These joints may include fingers, toes, knees, and elbows.

You can send NON-URGENT secure messages to your provider through our Patient Portal. Go to www.orthocarolina.com/portal. Once you are logged in, click on "MESSAGES" to submit your questions.

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WHAT NOT TO DO:

- Do not get your cast wet.
 - » This can potentially irritate or damage skin.
- Do not ever put anything inside of the cast to scratch an itch.
 - » This, too, can potentially irritate or damage skin.
 - » Taking a vacuum hose and applying it to the cast/splint pulls the air through the material and may provide relief. If not available, blowing cool air from a hairdryer or fan into the cast may help.
- Do not pull out or rearrange the cast padding inside the cast.
- Do not break off pieces or trim your own cast.
- Do not attempt to remove your cast yourself.
- Do not use powders, lotions, oils, or fluids near or inside of your cast.
- Do not allow the integrity of the cast to become compromised.
 - » Inspect your cast frequently for “break-down” and soft spots.

WHEN TO CONTACT YOUR PROVIDER:

- Pain or swelling that DOES NOT respond to elevation, ice or pain medication.
- Numbness and tingling in your hand or foot that DOES NOT respond to elevation.
- Cast feels too tight, or too loose.
- Burning, stinging or rubbing/pressure of your skin underneath the cast.
- Chafed, red or raw skin around the edges of your cast, or if you think you have infection.
- Damaged, cracked or breaking down of the cast itself.
- Strong or unusual odor or drainage coming from the cast.
- Fever.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS YOU NEED TO BE AWARE OF:

Compartment Syndrome is caused by swelling within the space that contains muscles, nerves, blood vessels, and bones. The swelling causes severe pain, and slows circulation to the muscles and nerves.

Symptoms can include:

- Pain that is unrelenting - even with the use of pain medication.
- More pain, more swelling than what was experienced during the initial injury.
- Using or stretching the involved muscles increases the pain.
- Tingling or burning sensation of the skin on the affected side.
- Muscles feeling tight or “full”.

Pressure Sores are a result of pressure or rubbing under a cast. They may develop over a bony area under the cast, such as an elbow, ankle or heel.

Symptoms can include:

- A warm spot on the cast.
- Pain.
- Drainage and an odor are symptoms that a pressure sore or skin infection may be present.

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