

## PLASTER CARE

It is important once you go home from hospital that your plaster cast is cared for correctly. The role of a plaster cast is to:

- to keep the arm/leg in a certain position, or
- to protect the area that has been operated on while it heals

### General Instructions

- Keep the plaster cast clean and dry at all times.
- When showering use a plastic bag and a rubber band or tape to secure the cast and keep it dry.
- The cast usually dries completely in 48 hours. Allow it to dry naturally and keep it away from direct heat.
- Check your skin each day for any areas that seem irritated or uncomfortable.
- Avoid bumping or hitting the cast.
- Do not try to modify, remove or trim the cast without speaking to Dr Slattery.
- Keep the limb in plaster raised above the level of the heart as much as possible.
- Keep children out of sandpits, and avoid vigorous activity

### Pain:

Fractures and surgery can be painful, take simple painkillers such as Panadol or Neurofen regularly, and any medications prescribed by your doctor. Simple elevation of the affected limb can also help to reduce pain and swelling

### Skin care

It is common for the skin under the cast to get dry and itchy. Don't put anything between the cast and the skin (ie do not use a ruler or knitting needle to scratch the skin under the cast). Items can get stuck under the cast and cause pressure injuries. Do not use lotions, powders or oils under or around the cast.

### Swelling

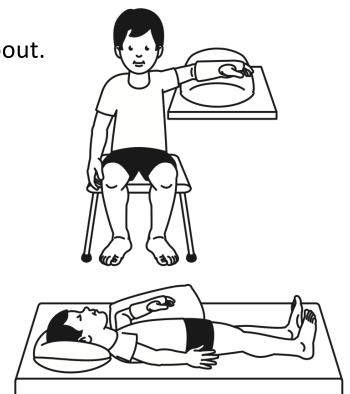
It is common to get some swelling of the fingers or toes around a plaster cast. Regularly wiggle and move your fingers or toes to help keep the blood flowing and reduce swelling.

### Arm:

- If you have been given a sling, always use it to keep the arm up when you are moving about.
- Rest the arm on pillows when you are sitting or lying down.
- At night elevate the arm on a pillow in bed

### Leg:

- The leg should be propped up on pillows when you are resting.
- Make sure you use walking aids such as crutches or a wheelchair if you have been advised to do so.



### When to seek urgent help:

Severe pain and swelling, change in the colour of the fingers (white or blue), numbness or pins and needles, and inability to move the fingers are concerning signs that the cast may be too tight. If any of these signs occur, rest and elevate the limb for 30 minutes.

Go immediately back to the hospital emergency department, when, even after elevating the limb for 30 minutes:

- the fingers remain very swollen
- the fingers remain white or blue
- if there are pins and needles, or numbness in the fingers
- If you are not be able to move their fingers, or complains of pain when you move them
- there is severe pain that is not relieved by the recommended medication at the recommended dose.

### Contact Dr Slattery if:

- the cast is cracked, soft, loose or tight, or has rough edges that hurt
- you are worried that an object has been pushed inside the cast
- there is an offensive smell or ooze coming from the cast
- there is increasing pain.