

Plaster cast

Treatment

You have been given a plaster or synthetic cast. This leaflet will explain how to care for the cast, what you should do when the cast is removed, what you should do if you have any complaints, and where you can go for answers to your questions.

You should take into account that your personal needs may differ from the situation described in this leaflet.

Plaster cast

You have been given a cast around your arm or leg. A synthetic or plaster cast ensures that the limb in the cast can rest and remain immobile. If there is a fracture, the cast will ensure that the bones remain in the proper position so they can heal. If there is a damaged joint or tendon, the cast provides rest.

Possible complications/risks

If swelling occurs after the cast has been removed, it will increase in the course of the day and be at its worst in the evening. There is no cause for concern; the swelling will gradually disappear. You can reduce the symptoms by not putting too much pressure on the leg or arm and elevating it or wearing an elastic stocking during the day.

Contact us

Please call us when:

- Despite elevation of your leg or arm, your fingers or toes tingle, swell or turn purple.
- You can hardly move your fingers or toes.
- The plaster cast causes pain or pinching (pain at the site of the fracture is usually not a cause for concern)
- Your cast has broken. If you have a walking cast, you must not put any weight on it.
- Your cast has become wet and limp.

Rules after treatment

Firmness

- The cast is hard after 48 hours. Therefore, you must take extra care during the first 2 days. Do not rest the cast on a hard surface, but place something soft beneath it;
- Circular synthetic casts harden fully after 30 minutes. Therefore, you do not need to be as careful as long.

Plaster and water

Plaster may not become wet. Synthetic plaster can hold up well in water, but the cotton stocking and padding underneath cannot. Use a plastic bag or special shower sleeve to protect the plaster or synthetic cast when showering. Shower as quickly as possible. A plastic bag can be made watertight by taping a band-aid to your skin. A special sleeve designed for showering can be purchased at the Rivas Leef&- gezondheidswinkel. The sleeves are usually not covered by health insurance.

Swelling

- Particularly during the first week, elevate the arm or leg in the cast as much as possible. This will reduce the swelling.
- if your arm is swollen, wear it in a sling or place the arm on a pillow on your lap. The hand must be higher than the elbow. You can remove the sling at night and place your arm on a pillow, if necessary.
- do not wear any rings if you have a plaster around your arm.

- if your leg is swollen, place it on one or more pillows. The foot must be higher than the knee and the knee must be higher than the hip. You can put a pillow under the foot-end of your mattress at night. Do not walk too much (with your crutches), since this causes the leg to hang down for a long time.

Exercises

It is important to do exercises to:

- stimulate the blood flow;
- maintain flexibility of the joints that are not in a cast; and
- to keep the muscles strong.

Try to repeat the following exercises several times a day and at least 5 times in succession.

Arm exercises

- Make a firm fist, count to 3, then stretch your fingers and count to 3;
- Rotate your shoulder: stand in a somewhat bent-over position and make a motion as if you are grinding coffee in the old-fashioned way;
- If the elbow is not in a cast: stretch and bend the elbow.

Leg exercises

- Flex your toes toward you (toward your nose) and count to 3, and then point your toes away and count to 3 (do not do this exercise if you have an injury to your toes);
- While sitting, lift up the stretched leg and count to 3;
- If the knee is not in a cast: bend and stretch the knee.

Diet

- Dairy provides the body with enough building blocks to convert the calcium from your diet into strong bones. Drinking or eating a portion of dairy four times a day is sufficient. Drinking or eating a portion of dairy four times a day is sufficient.
- Vitamin D helps your body to convert the calcium from your diet into strong bones.
- Vitamin D is created in your skin under the influence of sunlight. A little bit of sunlight is sufficient. You do not have to 'sunbathe'. Half an hour a day outdoors is sufficient.

Crutches

A plaster splint cannot be burdened because it will break. Therefore, you cannot walk or stand without using crutches. They are available at the Rivas Leef&-gezondheidswinkel in the central hall of Beatrix Hospital or in a Leef&-gezondheidswinkel in your neighborhood. The Rivas Leef&-gezondheidswinkels have a vast supply of healthcare equipment and health items to borrow, rent and purchase. They can also be ordered online in the web shop: www.rivasgezondheidswinkel.nl. You may put weight on circular plaster and synthetic casts if the doctor has told you so. You will receive instructions (depending on your injury).

Walking cast

- If you have a walking cast, make sure not to drag the leg in the cast. Walk as normally as possible. Since you are unable to use your ankle, take small steps when you walk.
- The walking cast generally has a sole attached that can be removed when you go to bed. This sole is often thicker than the sole of your shoes. To ensure that you do not have trouble when you walk, you can wear a shoe with a sole or heel of comparable thickness or height on the normal leg.
- If you have a walking cast, your leg must be supported when you sit. You can do this by placing your leg on a stool. This prevents swelling.

Itching and skin damage

Itching is generally caused by moisture between the skin and the cast. If you are bothered by itching, you can treat this by carefully drying the space between the skin and the cast with a blow dryer (not too hot or you may burn your skin!). A special spray against itchiness can also be purchased at your pharmacy.

In any case, do not use a knitting needle or other sharp object to combat the itching. This may cause serious skin damage.

Any small objects that have fallen between the cast and the skin may also damage your skin. Small children have been known to put small toys inside the cast.

Measures against thrombosis

If your doctor finds it necessary, blood thinners will be prescribed against thrombosis. That is wise for a thigh cast but sometimes also for a leg cast. The blood thinners are usually administered in the form of injections under the skin. Giving these injections can be learned or home care can be called in (see folder on Fraxiparine use).

Removing the cast

- If you come to the hospital to have a cast removed from your leg after a treatment period, we recommend bringing lace-up shoes or another type of sturdy shoe. Perhaps, you may be allowed to walk again.
- When having a circular plaster or synthetic cast removed from your leg, it is important to bring crutches. Chances are that your muscles and joints have become stiff and you may have trouble walking on the affected leg.
- Shortly after removing a circular plaster or synthetic plaster from the leg, the leg may swell. This applies to a lesser extent to the arm. You may receive an elastic support stocking to counteract the swelling. It should only be worn during the day. Elastic stockings should always be taken off at night!

Contact

If you still have any questions, please feel free to contact your treating physician.

For questions about your appointment, please contact the appointment office at tel. (0183) 64 42 29.

For questions about the cast, please contact the plaster room. Available from Monday to Friday from 8:30 am tot 4:30 pm

- Beatrix Hospital, Gorinchem: (0183) 64 45 69
- For urgent questions or problems outside office hours, please contact:
Emergency Room: (0183) 64 44 11

This information sheet has been compiled by the Association of Surgeons of the Netherlands. In some places, the text has been adapted to the situation at Beatrix Hospital.