

Go to an Emergency Dept. for immediate treatment if:

- Your fingers turn blue, feel cold, numb and/or continue to tingle like pins and needles even after raising them above your head for several minutes. This feeling could mean the cast is too tight and you should seek treatment immediately.

Contact your doctor or clinic with any of the following:

- Pain that does not go away with medication.
- Cast becomes loose, broken, cracked, or soft.
- The cast rubs or presses on an area and the skin becomes red or raw around cast edges.
- There is more swelling in the area than you had before the cast.
- Drainage from a surgical incision is visible outside the cast and/or has a bad smell.
- Your cast becomes soaked; it should be replaced to prevent incision infection and skin breakdown.

Short Arm Cast



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The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health care team.
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Introduction

You have just had a short arm cast put on to protect your broken bone from moving or to keep your surgical procedure stable until healed.

This pamphlet will provide you with some tips to manage your day-to-day activities and explain some things you can do to maintain the cast for the next 3–6 weeks.

Plaster casts are white and made out of a heavy white powder and when it is mixed with water, it forms a thick paste that hardens over 1–2 days.

A cast made of fiberglass is lighter in weight, stronger and more durable. It hardens in 1 hour and a ½. You have the option of choosing a colored cast.

Precautions

- While the cast is drying **do not** put any weight on it, squeeze it or rest it on a hard or sharp surface.

Non Waterproof Lining

- When showering use a thick plastic bag and tape the bag edge to your arm.
 - Waterproof tape – available at your local medical supply store or large drug stores (i.e. London Drugs/Pharmasave)

- Duct tape – it is effective, however for those with sensitive skin it may be uncomfortable when being removed.
- Saran™ wrap or Press ‘N’ Seal® can be used as an added seal over the tape.
- Waterproof sleeves can also be purchased at your local medical supply store.
- If the cast and cast lining do get damp, you may dry the cast and its lining using a hairdryer that is set at a **LOW/COLD temperature**.
- **Do not put any object under the cast** (i.e. coat-hanger, straw or stick) in hopes to relieve itchiness. You can break the skin and cause infection or damage the cast. **To relieve itching**, set a hairdryer on its lowest temperature setting or a fan and direct it down the cast.
- Keep soil, crumbs and especially powder away from the inside of the cast. Powder will **not** keep the inside of the cast dry; it will clump together and begin to smell.
- If you notice any rough edges on the cast, you may carefully file them down with an emery board or tape the rough edges to protect your skin. **Do not cut** the cast with scissors or attempt to break off those rough edges.

Waterproof Lining

- Use an unscented glycerine soap when showering
- Let water drain for ½ to 1 hour by holding your arm up or
- Gently squeeze water out into a towel wrapped around the cast
- It can take 2 to 3 hours to completely dry the lining.

At Home

- The arm should be elevated as much as possible after your surgery or injury to decrease swelling and to improve blood flow. As time goes by, you will be able to place your arm down for longer periods. A sling is not always recommended as keeping the arm immobilized may cause shoulder stiffness.
 - When sitting up in chair: place arm on a pillow on your lap
 - When lying down: place arm above heart line
 - When standing: hold elbow at a 90 degree angle or higher
- To decrease swelling and prevent joint stiffness, remember to move your fingers frequently (unless directed not to by the doctor).