



York and Scarborough
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Taking Care of Your Plaster Cast

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information,
please contact your local Plaster room.

Contact details are on page 10 and 11 of this leaflet

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Do's and Don'ts when wearing a plaster cast

There are some simple do's and don'ts that we would advise you to stick to in order to take the best care of your plaster cast:

DO NOT...

- ✗ Put any object down your plaster cast to relieve itching
- ✗ Wear your sling in bed or for longer than 24 hours unless advised to do so
- ✗ Walk on a leg cast until you are advised to do so
- ✗ Wear jewellery on the same hand, arm or wrist as your plaster cast
- ✗ You are not necessarily insured to drive with a cast
- ✗ Rest your cast on any hard surfaces

DO...

- ✓ Elevate your arm/leg regularly to prevent/control any swelling
- ✓ Exercise/move regularly, bending and straightening joints that are not in a cast every half hour whilst awake (especially fingers)
- ✓ Keep your cast dry
- ✓ Contact your local plaster room as soon as you suspect a problem

You must contact your local plaster room immediately if your cast gets...

- Wet
- Loose
- Tight
- Uncomfortable
- A foreign object inside it
- Cracked/Broken
- Any other cast related problems

You must contact the plaster room immediately if you experience the following in your fingers/ toes...

- Numbness
- Tingling
- Blueness under your finger nails/toe nails

...or increasing pain related to your injury.

If you have a problem requiring urgent attention and your local plaster room is closed, please attend your local Emergency Department.

Important Information about Venous Thromboembolism (VTE)?

VTE is the name given to a blood clot that forms in the deep veins that run through your body. The most common place for a blood clot to form is in the veins in one of your legs. This is called a deep vein thrombosis or DVT for short. A DVT usually causes pain and swelling of the affected leg.

If a blood clot becomes dislodged, passes through your circulation and reaches your lungs, this is called a pulmonary embolism or PE for short. A PE can cause chest pain, breathlessness and coughing (sometimes with blood stained phlegm).

A DVT or PE requires urgent treatment. If you develop any of the symptoms of DVT or PE either in hospital or soon after leaving hospital, you should get medical help immediately.

When should I seek urgent medical advice?

Please get medical advice if you experience any of the following:

- Unusual swelling and pain in your leg(s)
- Unusual sudden onset of breathlessness
- Coughing or spitting up blood
- Any episode of collapse or dizziness
- Fast heart rate or palpitations

Important Information about pressure Ulcers under plaster casts

Advice for Staff and Patients

Ulcers can occur when plaster cast rubs on the skin, or pressure builds up due to the swelling. It is important that you report any redness, discomfort or pain to a healthcare professional. **Do not wait for your next appointment; the skin breakdown will only get worse.**

These ulcers are painful, and you can get an infection if the skin is broken. This can cause serious complications in your recovery, especially if you are diabetic.

To help prevent getting pressure ulcers:

- Change position regularly
- Making sure all bony areas are free from pressure
- Use cushions under your calf muscle and away from your heel.
- Keep your skin well moisturised
- Report **any** concerns with your plaster cast as soon as possible

Please contact your local plaster room as soon as possible (see page 10) or inform a member of staff if you notice this at an appointment or while you are in hospital.

Important Information on looking after your Humeral Fracture.

You have broken the long bone between your shoulder and elbow. A fractured humerus can be very painful and mobile, you may feel and hear the bone moving in the brace or plaster cast, although this is unpleasant it is normal.

Swelling and Bruising, your arm may be very swollen for the first few weeks, around the elbow, forearm and hand, to help reduce the swelling and stiffness in your hand and wrist you must keep moving by clenching your hand into a fist and then stretching your fingers out. To wash under your arm, you will need to sit and lean forward and out to allow your arm to swing and use a damp flannel or wipes.

The following Do's and Don'ts are designed to help you manage your fracture

Do...

- **Let your arm hang**, do not attempt to put the affected arm through the sleeves of clothing.
- **Sleep Propped Up**, (sitting up is ideal) this allows the bone to hang in line.

- **Keep your arm under clothing**, to prevent excessive movement of the bone – it may mean you cannot wear your normal clothes.
- **Ring the plaster room if you have a problem**, the cast or brace becomes loose or if you are concerned.
- **Wear your sling at all times**, unless advised to do so by your doctor. The sling provided is a collar and cuff sling to allow the elbow to hang lower than the wrist.

Don't....

- **Rest your arm or any surfaces** (chair arm, cushion, leg). **The arm must always hang.**
- **Remove your foam sling**, unless you have been asked to do so by the Doctor.
- **Thread your arm through clothing.**
- **Get the cast wet** (No Showers or Baths).

Be Aware, your balance may be affected so take your time when walking about and going up and down stairs

If your cast or brace becomes loose, slips down or is causing you to be sore please ring Plaster Room and ask to speak to a practitioner.

Out of hours please contact the Emergency Department.

How to remove your soft cast at home

Soft Cast is a type of plaster cast that is designed to be flexible but strong enough to protect the bone while it is healing. Unlike a standard plaster cast you don't always need to return to the plaster room to have it removed.

You will be advised by your doctor or GP practitioner when to remove your soft cast at home.

To Remove Your Cast:

1. Find the end of the casting tape and tease away the end
2. Support the limb while slowly unwinding the material
3. When you come to the enforcing strip it may need some extra encouragement to come away, but carry on unpeeling
4. After you have removed the cast, you may bathe the limb and start moving the limb in warm soapy water.

If you have any concerns about removing your own cast, please call the plaster room during opening hours for a step-by-step guide over the phone or to make an appointment for a member of staff to remove it.

Useful contact Numbers and opening hours

York Hospital Patients:

York Plaster Room:
Telephone: 01904 726523
Monday to Friday 9am – 4.00pm

York Emergency
Department:
Telephone:
01904 726587

Scarborough Hospital Patients:

Scarborough Plaster Room:
Telephone: 01723 342042
Monday to Friday
9.00am to 4.00pm

Scarborough
Emergency
Department:
Telephone:
01723 342145

Your appointments

When you receive an appointment letter, please check the location of your appointment before attending.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Jo Bradley-Smith, Lead Orthopaedic Practitioner,
Fracture Clinic, York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York,
YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 726523.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:
www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

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