



Cast Care

Instructions for
patients and families

When is the cast dry?

- **Fiberglass:** Allow one hour for the cast to dry.
- **Plaster:** Allow two full days for the cast to dry.

How do you take care of a cast?

- Keep the cast dry.
- **No swimming allowed!**
- Keep your child's cast clean. If it gets dirty, you may clean it with a white vinegar and water solution. Use a damp (not dripping wet) cloth. Allow the cast to dry thoroughly after cleaning. You can use a hair dryer set on cool (do not use heat) to help it dry faster.
- If you decorate the cast, leave a lot of space between drawings. This allows the cast to breathe, which is good for skin underneath it.
- Check your child's cast for any roughness or sharp edges. Protect their skin with foam pads or moleskin.
- Always keep the cast raised above your child's heart when resting.

Itching

- Itch is usually caused by moisture on the skin or a healing wound. This can be helped with the use of a hair dryer on a cool setting, or a vacuum.
- Do not use any objects for scratching under the cast (coat hangers, knitting needles, etc.). Instead, use a game or activity to distract your child until the itching stops.
- Benadryl may also help with itching. It is available over the counter without a prescription.

Bathing with a cast

Bathing outside a tub or shower

Wash your child's body using this method. It is often called a "sponge bath":

1. Your child may sit, stand or lie down. Use the position that works best for your child and/or works best to keep water out of the cast.
2. Take a wash cloth and wet it with warm water.
3. Wring out the wash cloth.
4. Put a small amount of liquid soap on the wash cloth or rub a bar of soap on it a few times.
5. Wash your child's body. Be careful to keep water away from the cast.
6. Rinse the soap out of the washcloth.

7. Now, use the wet washcloth to rinse the soap off your child.
8. Dry your child, drying near the cast first to prevent water from getting inside the cast.

Wash your child's hair using one of these methods:

1. Have your child stand or sit in front of a sink with their head over the sink. The kitchen sink, which may have a spray nozzle, works well.
2. Have your child lie on the kitchen counter with their head hanging over the sink. Make sure to pad the edge of the sink with a towel so your child's neck will be comfortable. This method works well for children in body casts.

Bathing inside a tub or shower

Do not use this method if your child is wearing a body cast.

You can buy cast covers at a drug store. We find heavy garbage bags with no holes in them to work just as well and cost less. To shower:

1. Cover the cast with a heavy garbage bag with no holes in it.
2. Using sewing elastic that is at least 1 inch wide, tie the elastic around your child's arm/leg above the cast, as tight as you can. Use a bow—not a knot—to secure the elastic.
3. Use a second garbage bag and do exactly the same thing covering the first garbage bag entirely.
4. Place a stool or plastic chair in the shower or bathtub.
5. Have your child sit on the stool or chair trying to keep the casted limb out of the tub or shower.
6. Using a hand held shower **only**, turn on the water and wet your child's body. Wet their hair at this time as well if you are going to wash it.
7. Turn off the hand held shower. If you leave the hand held shower running the water will find a way to get down into the cast.
8. Wash with soap and shampoo.
9. Turn on the hand held shower and rinse off.
10. Dry around the top of the bags first. Do this right after you turn the water off.
11. Help your child get out of the shower or bath. Dry your child quickly. Then undo the elastic by pulling the end (this is why you tie it with a bow). Dry around the top of the second bag. Then remove the second bag and quickly dry around the top of the cast.
12. Use your hair dryer on the cool setting to dry around the top of the cast. If your child is wearing a leg cast, use the blow dryer on the toes, too.
13. Check the garbage bags for any holes caused by the cast. If there are no holes the bags may be used again. Make sure to dry them out before the next use.

To Learn More

- Surgery Center
206-987-5145
- Ask your child's nurse
or doctor
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask
your child's nurse.
- From outside the
hospital, call the
toll-free Family
Interpreting Line
1-866-583-1527.
Tell the interpreter
the name or extension
you need.
- For Deaf and hard of
hearing callers
206-987-2280 (TTY)

Reminders

- Follow the steps exactly. Do not take short cuts.
- Use **only** a hand held shower. **always** sit in the shower or bath.
- **Always** have a parent in the room with the child.

What about activities?

- Your child may start physical activities again when their doctor says it's OK.
- Make sure your child gets plenty of rest to help their body with healing.

When should the doctor be called?

Call the doctor if your child:

- Has swollen fingers or toes
- Feels numbness or tingling
- Can't move their toes or fingers
- Is in a lot of pain
- Cast breaks or gets wet

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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