



Plaster casts are made up of a bandage and a hard covering (usually plaster of Paris), some will be half casts and some will be full casts. They allow broken bones in the arm or leg to heal by holding them in place, and usually need to stay on for several weeks or until the orthopaedic doctor says can be removed. Taking good care of your cast will help ensure a better recovery.

### **How should I look after my plaster cast?**

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- Keep the limb in the cast elevated and rest it for the first 24-48 hours to avoid swelling and help the cast dry.
- Exercise the joints not in the cast e.g. fingers, toes, shoulder, elbow or knee.
- Avoid pressing on your cast for 48 hours after it is applied to allow it to set properly as it will still be soft for this time.
- Do not try to alter the length or position of the cast.
- Avoid getting the plaster cast wet or knocking it. Only use a plastic bag to cover up the cast when you have a bath or shower, sealing the bag at the top and bottom. You can purchase special covers from pharmacies or the hospital may give you information.
- Refrain from inserting any objects inside the plaster cast. If your cast is fibreglass blowing cold air from a hairdryer may relieve some itching.

- Refrain from driving while your limb is in the plaster cast; contact your car insurance company for advice.
- Do not lift anything heavy and avoid strenuous activity.
- Use over the counter painkillers like Paracetamol or Ibuprofen if experience any pain.
- Use Crutches or sling as advised by your health professional.

### **Are there any problems to look out for?**

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- If the plaster cast feels too tight.
- Extreme swelling (a little swelling is usual).
- Severe pain in your injured limb.
- Numbness or 'pins and needles' in the limb that is in the plaster cast.
- Any new discolouration to fingers or toes or unable to move them.
- The plaster cast is becoming loose or otherwise uncomfortable.
- If the skin becomes itchy, sore or an unpleasant smell comes from beneath the cast.
- The plaster is becoming soft, gets wet or cracks appear.

### **Reference source**

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- NHS Choices – [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)