

Care of your cast

Patient information - Orthopaedic Services

Please read the following instructions carefully

1 Drying of the Cast

- An arm plaster cast takes 24 hours to dry. A leg plaster cast takes 48 hours to dry. A fibreglass cast takes 20 minutes to completely dry and reach maximum strength.
- Do not dry the cast by a heater or with a hair dryer as you will burn the skin under the cast.
- Rest the cast on something soft while it is drying, e.g. a pillow or in a sling (you will be advised how long to wear the sling for).



2 Cast Care

- Do not walk on your leg cast until you have been told to by the doctor and have been fitted with a cast shoe.
- Do not chip, crush, cut or break your cast.
- Do not get the cast wet (unless advised that you have a waterproof cast). Moisture will weaken or destroy the cast and can damage your skin underneath the cast. For bathing and showering, wrap a towel around your plaster and cover it with a well-sealed plastic bag.
- A waterproof liner can be purchased dependent on your injury.

3 Self Care

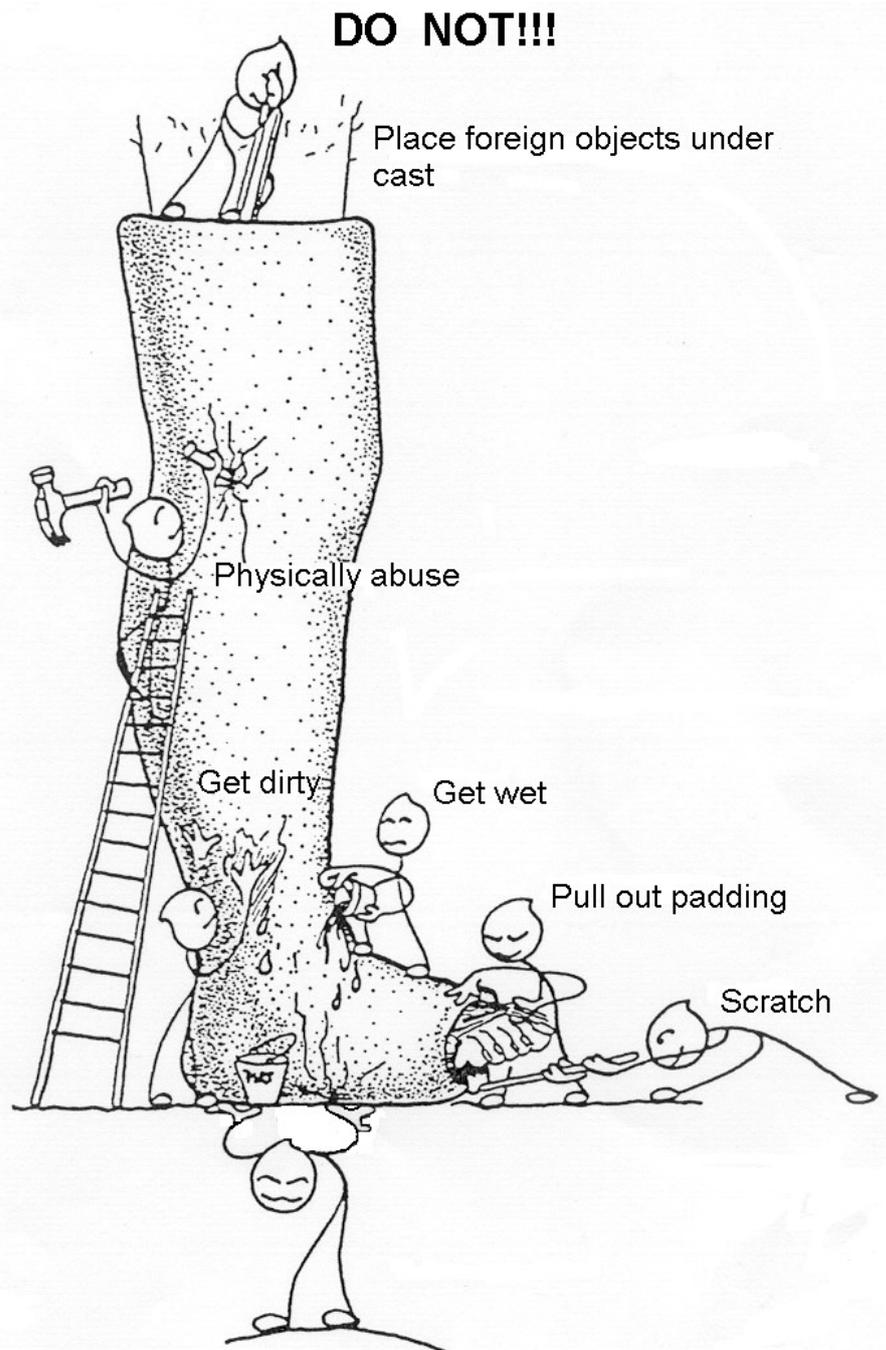
- The cast will help reduce the pain, but pain killers may still be required. Take as instructed.
- There may be swelling for the first few days so keep your casted limb elevated. For arm/hand casts refer to the Patient Information pamphlet "Exercises of your Arm and Hand while in a Cast". For leg casts, move your toes.
- Do not insert anything into your plaster (e.g.. a back scratcher, knitting needle, pen or powder) to relieve itching. Any foreign matter can damage the skin and cause infection. Pushing the padding further down into the cast can cause it to bunch up resulting in pressure on your skin. Remember to sponge fingers/toes of limb in cast.

- It is not advisable to play sport while you are in an arm or a leg cast.
- Bring your crutches with you each time you visit the Orthopaedic Outpatients Department in case your plaster is changed or removed. You may need them initially when you first come out of a cast until your ankle loosens up, and you regain your confidence walking without the protection of the cast.
- Return all crutches to us when they are no longer required.

4 Problems

- Contact Orthopaedic Outpatient Dept, Christchurch Hospital (364 0800) (or Surgical Orthopaedic Unit, Burwood Hospital (383 6834) if you were treated there) and arrange a time to be seen if you have any concerns or you are experiencing any of the following:

- ⇒ Your plaster feels too tight or too loose, or it is rubbing.
- ⇒ Your plaster is broken, cracked or soft.
- ⇒ Your plaster gets damp or wet.
- ⇒ You have dropped any object down inside your cast.
- ⇒ You experience prolonged numbness or tingling, like pins and needles in your fingers and toes or you can't move them.
- ⇒ Your fingers or toes go blue or white and feel cold.
- ⇒ You have increased swelling or pain in the affected limb.
- ⇒ You have a burning sensation under the cast.
- ⇒ You have symptoms of infection such as a fever, unusual pain or a foul odour from the cast.



For more information about:

- your health and medication, go to www.healthinfo.org.nz
- hospital and specialist services, go to www.cdhb.health.nz