

# Caring for Your Cast: Your Daily Guide

Medical-Surgical · Musculoskeletal / Orthopedics

A cast holds a broken bone still while it heals. Good cast care controls swelling, protects your skin, and helps you spot problems early.

## Control swelling

- For the first 24 to 72 hours, prop the cast on pillows above the level of your heart.
- Use ice over the cast as your care team tells you. Keep the ice in a sealed bag so the cast stays dry.
- Wiggle your fingers or toes often.

## Keep it dry

- Cover the cast with a plastic bag or cast cover to bathe.
- Never soak it in a tub, pool, or hot tub.
- If it gets damp, dry it with a hair dryer on the cool setting.

## Protect your skin

- **Never put anything inside the cast to scratch.**
- For itching, blow cool air from a hair dryer into the cast.
- Do not put powder or lotion inside. Do not pull out the padding.

## Check your fingers or toes

- Several times a day, compare them with the other side.

- They should be pink, warm, move easily, and feel normal.

## Protect the cast

- Never cut, trim, or remove the cast.
- Put weight on the limb only when your provider says.

## Call your provider today if you have

- A bad smell or fluid coming from the cast
- A warm spot on the cast
- A cast that is cracked, soft, wet, or loose
- Red or sore skin at the edges

## Call 911 or your local emergency number if you have

- Pain that your pain medicine does not help
- Pain when you move your fingers or toes
- Numbness, tingling, or fingers or toes you cannot move
- Pale, blue, or cold fingers or toes
- Sudden shortness of breath or chest pain
- **Call 911 or go to the emergency room right away. Do not wait.**

*This handout supports, not replaces, advice from your own nurse or doctor.*

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