

**Your cast is:**

- Fiberglass with Cotton Lining
- Fiberglass with Gortex Lining
- Plaster with Cotton Lining

**Date your cast was put on:**

**Your follow-up appointment will be on:**

**Your cast will be removed in about:**

**Questions or problems?**

Call your Dartmouth-Hitchcock Orthopaedics office:

- Concord:** (603) 224-5522
- Keene:** (603) 354-5482
- Lebanon:** (603) 650-5133
- Manchester:** (603) 695-2830
- Nashua:** (603) 577-4340

## Cast Care Tips

**You've been given a cast made of plaster or fiberglass. This cast will hold your arm or leg in place to help the injured bone heal. It is best to have a helper around for the first few days to help you get used to how your everyday activities may be affected. If you treat your cast well, it will treat you well, meaning a fast recovery! Here are some helpful tips about your new cast:**

### General Cast Care Tips for All Cast Types



- Be sure to keep dirt, sand, and powder away from the edges of your cast to avoid irritating your skin.
- Do not pull the padding from inside your cast. It is there to protect your skin.
- If you have been given support tools such as a sling or crutches, please use them whenever possible. They will help keep the pressure off of your injured limb while it is healing.
- If you have a walking cast, do not walk on it until it is completely dry and hard (about 1 hour for a fiberglass cast and 2-3 days for a plaster cast).
- If you have a walking cast, you will have a black cast shoe. Do not walk on it until it is completely dry and hard (about 1 hour for a fiberglass cast and 2-3 days for a plaster cast). Otherwise, do not walk with your injured leg.

## Keeping Your Cast Dry

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### Instructions for Plaster or Fiberglass with Cotton Lining

It is important to keep your cast dry. If your cast gets wet, it will become soft and will not be able to hold your limb in place. A wet cast can also cause irritation or sores on your skin.

When you take a bath or shower, keep your cast completely out of the water and cover it with two large heavy-duty plastic bags that are tied off or taped at the top. It may also help to wrap a washcloth or small hand towel at the top of your cast to make sure no water gets under the cast. Do not submerge your cast in water. You can also purchase waterproof shields from our office. Your insurance will not cover this purchase.

If your cast gets slightly wet, pat it dry with a towel and try drying it with a hair dryer set on the cool setting for 15-30 minutes. If the cast is still soft or is soaking or wet, call your orthopaedic provider's office. You will need to have a new cast put on.



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### Instructions for Fiberglass with Gortex Lining

If you have a fiberglass cast with a gortex lining, you can submerge the cast in water if you need to. Most of the water will drain out of the ends of your cast. The remaining moisture is warmed by body heat, becomes vapor, and passes through the cast.



## Getting Comfortable

You may experience swelling inside your cast for the first 48-72 hours, which will make your cast feel snug or tight. To reduce pain or swelling, elevate your arm or leg above your heart by using pillows or a recliner. Elevation helps fluid and blood to drain down to your heart.



Icing can also help with pain and swelling. Place ice in a dry zip-top plastic bag or use an ice pack. Gently wrap the ice around your cast near the spot of your injury. Be careful to not get your cast wet.

Try to wiggle your toes or fingers (if they are not casted) every so often to improve your blood flow and help your healing.



If you have an itch inside your cast, do not stick any objects such as coat hangers or knitting needles inside your cast to scratch your skin. You will risk puncturing your skin or harming the cast, which can mean a longer recovery time. Also, do not apply powders or deodorant to stop the itching. Instead, try raising the cast or changing positions to get rid of the itching. A blow dryer set on the cool setting may also help.



Do not break off the rough edges of your cast or trim the cast before seeing your doctor. However, you can use a nail file to smooth the rough edges of your cast if you need to.

If you are experiencing some tenderness from the cast rubbing your skin, our casting team can give you material called "moleskin".

This is soft on one side and sticky on the other. It is stuck to your skin where the cast is rubbing. With some casts, the casting technician will automatically put moleskin on your skin to prevent irritation from the cast edge. You will also be given extra moleskin to apply yourself in case the first one falls off or gets dirty.

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- If your toes or fingers get cold, you can raise them up (above your heart if possible) and cover them with a sock or blanket.
  - Do not use anything other than mild soap and water to clean dirty skin near or under your cast. This is important to make sure you do not damage your skin or get the cast wet.
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## When to Call Us

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### **Please call our office if you notice that:**

- your fingers or toes change color, tingle, or feel cold to the touch
- the skin around the edge of the cast is painful, irritated, or red
- your cast is cracked or has soft spots
- there is more pain or swelling, or if you can't wiggle your toes or fingers
- the cast seems too tight (causes cold fingers/toes, numbness or tingling, or blotchy skin) or too loose, or if something is stuck inside
- there is a bad odor coming from inside the cast or there is itching that won't stop
- you have a wet cast
- your cast is loose
- you can move your ankle or wrist in the cast and it's causing friction