

# Plaster casts

## Patient information

Today a plaster cast has been put on your child's arm or leg following an injury or fracture. Some symptoms can sometimes occur hours or even days afterwards which may require the immediate adjustment or renewal of the cast.

### What are the potential problems?

- **Pain or burning sensation**

Persistent pressure, for example as a result of creases in the plaster, can sometimes lead to constant rubbing of the skin. This can be very painful if allowed to continue, and may cause pressure sores.

- **Tingling or prickling of the skin**
- **A numb feeling in the limb encased in plaster**
- **White or blue discolouration of the skin**

If the plaster cast is too tight, for example, it can cause tingling, numbness or skin discolouration.

- **Swelling**

Restricted blood flow – due to leaving the arm or leg unsupported for a while, for instance – can sometimes cause swelling in the fingers or toes. Elevate the affected limb for 30-60 minutes to improve the blood flow.

### When should I go immediately to the hospital's Emergency department?

- If the symptoms described above do not improve.
- If the cast slips or loosens, or becomes wet or cracked.

### **How can discomfort be avoided?**

- In the first few days, use cushions or pillows to elevate the injured arm or leg above the heart.
- Leave the heel free.
- Move the uninjured fingers or toes around several times a day.
- Do not use an arm sling to try and prevent neck pain.

### **Personal hygiene**

- Wash your child with a face cloth, or very carefully with a handheld shower head.
- Make sure your child keeps the injured arm or leg raised and well away from running water so that none goes into the cast.
- Protecting the cast with a plastic bag is not a good idea, as it does not provide full protection. In addition, condensation can build up inside the plastic bag, which can also make the plaster wet.

If you still have any questions or uncertainties, contact your paediatrician or phone the helpline on 0900 712712

(CHF 3.23/min. on a Swiss landline) or 0900 712713 (CHF 3.12/min. for calls on pre-paid mobiles).