

Getting straight with orthopaedics – A resource for schools – 2008

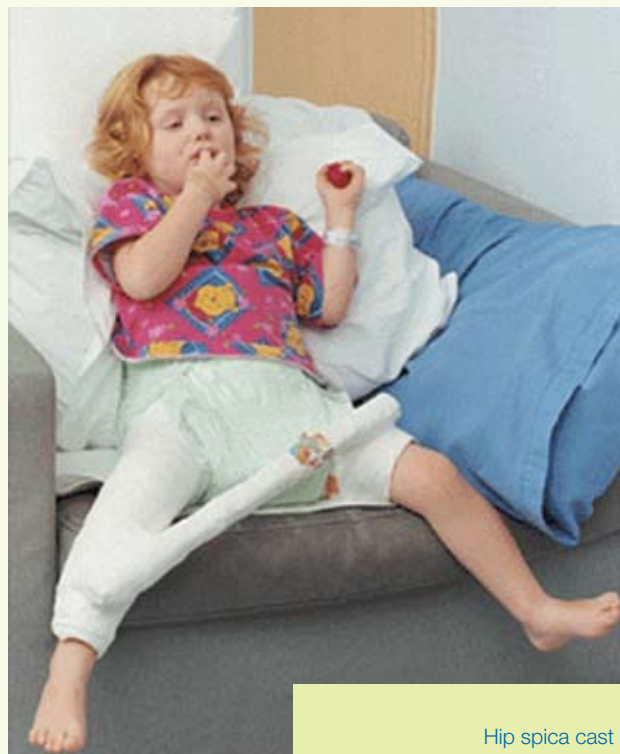
Hip spica plasters

These plasters are applied to both legs and over the torso of the child or young person – sometimes as high as the rib cage. The legs are positioned slightly apart (in a V-shape), and the hips and knees may have a degree of bend in them but not enough to sit upright.

This plaster arrangement is commonly used for school-aged children to manage certain types of fractures. It has a small opening for toileting purposes and a small amount of room to allow the stomach to expand. The plasters are generally worn for six weeks.

Your student may:

- Experience pain and fatigue initially when plasters are applied.
- Find sitting upright very difficult as they are unable to change the angle of their hips.
- Find their mobility is restricted. Small children may get around on a wide scooter-board on the floor. (Watch that their fingers do not get caught under the wheels, and supervise closely near slopes and steps.) Older children may need a wheelchair with a reclining back or a specialised seat.
- Be unable to go up or down stairs.
- Find it awkward to get in/out of cars, move through doorways, and get on and off the toilet, especially if the toilet is positioned too close to walls.
- Find transfers from one sitting position to another to be risky. Allow enough time for the student to move from one position to another safely. Safe manual handling techniques and equipment may be required.
- Experience high levels of frustration due to their physical limitations.



Hip spica cast

Implications for education

These should be read in conjunction with the General advice for school inclusion section of *Getting straight with orthopaedics: A resource for schools, 2008*.

Assistance may be required for transfers between different types of furniture, but the child or young person should not be manually fully lifted. A hoist with a supportive sling may be required for safe manual handling.

In the classroom, seating options include using:

- A reclining wheelchair.
- A beanbag (if the child is small enough to get down to the floor without a high risk of falling).
- An armchair filled with pillows and cushions for comfort.

A commode with a removable pan can be used for toileting problems when buildings cannot be modified. Additional toileting assistance may be required to maintain hygiene.

Allow sufficient time for your student to change positions, especially at the end of lessons when everyone else is up and moving around.

It may be difficult for your student to see all areas of the classroom from a seated, reclined position. Think about ways they can be included to see the same things as their peers (for example, use worksheets or laptops with adjustable screens).

While in plaster, your student will have limited ability to participate in physical education activities, depending on what these are. Please seek advice regarding their individual capacities.

Wearing school uniform over the plasters may be difficult unless the clothing has been adapted.

