

Fractures in children: caring for your child in an arm cast



ORTHOPAEDIC FACT SHEET

Your child has a (plaster) cast to support and protect the bone while the fracture heals. Correct care of your child's cast at home is very important.

Pain

Fractures are painful. Simple pain medication such as paracetamol (e.g. Panadol™) is often needed. Give regularly for the first few days following the directions on the packet, or as directed by the doctor.

Swelling

During the first one or two days it is important to rest and elevate the arm to minimise swelling. Raise the arm on pillows when sitting or lying down (Figure 1) and use a sling when moving around. Encourage your child to move their fingers frequently.

Skin care

Itching under the cast is common. Avoid scratching inside the cast as this may damage the skin and cause infection. Do not push any object inside the cast. Never cut or attempt to modify the cast.

Cast care

Keep the cast clean and dry. When showering or bathing, seal the cast in a plastic bag with tape or a rubber band. Never immerse in water.

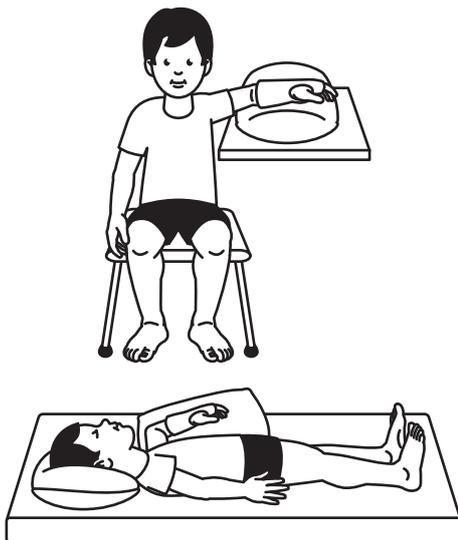


Figure 1. Raise the arm on a pillow when sitting or lying down

When to seek urgent help

Severe pain and swelling, change in the colour of the fingers (white or blue), numbness or pins and needles, and inability to move the fingers are concerning signs that the cast may be too tight. If any of these signs occur, rest and elevate the limb for 30 minutes.

Take your child immediately back to the hospital emergency department, when, even after elevating the limb for 30 minutes:

- the fingers remain very swollen
- the fingers remain white or blue
- the child complains of pins and needles, or numbness in the fingers
- the child is not be able to move their fingers, or complains of pain when you move them
- there is severe pain that is not relieved by the recommended medication at the recommended dose.

Take your child to the hospital you attended, or the local doctor if:

- the cast is cracked, soft, loose or tight, or has rough edges that hurt
- you are worried that an object has been pushed inside the cast
- there is an offensive smell or ooze coming from the cast
- there is increasing pain.