



**Droit  
au  
cœur**

# **How to take care of your cast**

**Information leaflet  
for users  
and their relatives**

A cast is a rigid mold (made of plaster of Paris or fiberglass) applied to a limb or a portion of the body to immobilize it following a fracture, sprain or dislocation, to assist in healing. The length of time it is applied varies according to the severity of the injury and is determined by the physician.

## Drying

- White plaster of Paris takes 72 hours to dry.
- Fiberglass takes 2 hours to dry.
- If your physician allows you to bear weight on your cast, do not do so before aforementioned drying times.

## Water and your plaster

Only fiberglass casts with a certain undercoating can be submerged in water. Do not wet your cast unless you have been formally authorized to do so.

For any other type of cast, it is essential to keep it dry. If you get your cast wet, there is a risk of maceration and infection. Immediately call the numbers below to have it changed.

When you take a shower, protect your cast with a towel as well as a plastic bag.

## Weight bearing

It is important that you do not walk on a cast boot, unless advised otherwise by the physician. Instead use crutches. Refer to the physician's prescription for instructions concerning weight bearing.

## How to reduce swelling

Swelling is a normal inflammation process and can take up to a year before disappearing completely.

To reduce swelling, raise the limb with the cast as often as possible and do the exercises explained below in this document.

## How to reduce the pain

During the first two weeks following installation of your cast, it is normal to feel pain.

To reduce the pain, you can:

- Raise the limb with the cast higher than your heart;
- Take over-the-counter anti-pain medication;  
If you have received an analgesic prescription (pain killers) from your physician, follow his/her instructions.



## Suggested exercises

- Move your extremities and all your free articulations in order to encourage blood circulation.
- For a fractured leg  
As often as possible, contract the thigh muscle, bend the knee, do extensions and knee bends.  
Move your toes (unless you have had toe surgery).
- For a fractured arm  
Open and close your fist frequently. Move your fingers, shoulder and elbow. Extend and bend your elbow.

## Important information

- Do not introduce objects under the cast if your skin is itchy. You risk injuring yourself and creating a wound. Instead use a hairdryer and direct cold air inside the cast.
- Do not wear jewelry on the limb with the cast.
- Avoid intense and violent physical activities (martial arts, boxing, etc.).
- Avoid exposing your cast to intense sun or heat.

## Signs of complications to watch for

- Strong pain persists even if you raise your fractured limb and take pain killers according to the prescribed dose.
- Constant cramps or a burning sensation.
- A nauseating odour which emanates from your cast.
- Discharge coming from a wound on your limb with the cast.
- Swelling that increases and is visible.
- A persistent fever for over 24 hours, without apparent cause.

*If in doubt, you can always contact Info-Santé 811 or the orthopedic team at your hospital.*

## Consult immediately if

- You have difficulty breathing, pain in your chest or calf;
- Swelling of the limb in the cast is so great that there is no more space between the cast and the limb;
- You note a loss of mobility, coldness, bluish coloration or swelling of the extremity of the limb in the cast.



## Safe withdrawal of the plaster cast

- Do not try to remove the cast by yourself.
- Removal is carried out in the orthopedic clinic. It is a painless manouver, carried out with a special saw without danger to the skin.
- After removal of your cast, clean your skin with water and soap.
- Apply a hydrating cream if needed.
- Return to your activities according to the physician's instructions.

## Who to contact for all your questions?

### Orthopedic Clinic

- Hôpital du Haut-Richelieu  
450 359-5000, extension 2162  
Open 7 days a week between 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Hôpital Charles-Le Moyne  
450 466-5000, extension 2249  
Open Monday to Friday, between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

OR

- Info-Santé 8-1-1





Printing Code: 4710

**Production**

© CISSS de la Montérégie-Centre  
Direction des soins infirmiers  
Publication: February 2022

**Centre intégré  
de santé et de  
services sociaux de  
la Montérégie-Centre**

**Québec** 

The logo for the province of Québec, featuring a blue square divided into four smaller squares, each containing a white fleur-de-lis.