

# CAST CARE

## 5 Simple Tips for taking care of your cast or splint

To ensure proper healing of your fracture, it's important to take great care of the cast or splint. Everyone heals differently depending upon age and quality of health. Here are a few tips to get the best outcome with your cast during the healing process.

1. Make sure the splint/cast is clean and dry. A wet cast can saturate the skin and break it down. The skin becomes soft and can slough off or become raw. If it becomes raw, bacteria in the cast can cause irritation or a bad infection. Water can also infect an incision if you had surgery. If a couple drops of water splash on the cast, don't panic. Pad it dry or use a blow dryer. If the cast gets saturated, call your physician. It may need to be changed. To keep it dry, we recommend a cast cover, often sold at area drugstores. This can slide on with no tape or rubber bands and hug the skin to ensure a good seal while showering. Another option is to cover the cast with a plastic bag, and use a rubber band to close the open end.
2. Elevating the area with the splint or cast is key to bringing down swelling. Always try to elevate above the level of your heart. We know this can be difficult, but proper elevation can also bring pain levels down. If you have a splint/cast on your lower extremity, never place anything under your heel. Elevate under the leg/calf and leave your heel free from touching anything. This will decrease your chance of developing a sore on your heel. Keep fingers and toes moving for good circulation unless your physician instructs you otherwise.
3. If the splint/cast becomes too loose, call your physician and let them know, as that may allow the broken bone to move depending on how it is fractured.
4. Do not place anything inside the splint/cast, such as a pencil or a hanger. This can break or scratch the skin leading to infection. Do not place any object inside the cast that can become wedged between your skin and the cast material. This could cause a pressure sore and the object



could get under the skin. If the skin becomes

itchy under the cast DO NOT put anything down the cast to itch it. You can try tapping the area of the cast that is itching, or put a cool setting on a blow dryer and try to blow the air down into the cast (not loosening it up too much). If that does not work and you are NOT allergic to Benadryl, children's Benadryl can sometimes take the edge off.

5. If you notice the splint/cast becoming too tight, elevate the extremity, if this does not reduce the swelling or tight feeling, call your physician, stop in to GO Ortho or go to the ER where they can look at it and treat accordingly.

**Make sure to follow the instructions of your Physician to ensure a great outcome during the healing process of your broken bone.**

### Splint vs a Cast: what's the difference?

**SPLINT:** A splint is a rigid support that can be made from plaster or fiberglass. It's usually dipped in water to speed up the drying time. A splint is applied to enable room to expand and accommodate swelling if need be. They are NOT circumferential, so they do not wrap completely around the extremity. Most often, splints are a straight slab type or clamp shell type. Both allow room to expand if needed.

**CAST:** A cast is a rigid immobilization that also can be made of plaster or fiberglass. This too is dipped in water to speed up the drying time. Whether it's plaster or fiberglass, both will dry to a very hard covering to help protect a broken bone. A cast IS circumferential, which means it is wrapped all the way around and covers the area completely. With a proper fitting cast, there will not be any room in case swelling occurs, which is why elevation is so important. A cast is usually applied after the swelling has gone down.

