

Department of trauma and orthopaedics

You and your cast

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Why am I in a cast?

Your cast protects a broken (or fractured) bone in your arm or leg. It helps the bone heal in the right place. It stops the area from moving. It reduces pain. Your cast is made of plaster or fiberglass.

If you have questions, ask a staff member in the plaster room where your cast was put on.

How do I look after my cast?

- **do not get your cast wet.** The top layer is waterproof, but the lower layers are not. If they get wet, you can get blisters on your skin. This can cause a bad smell in your cast.
- **do not put anything inside your cast,** even if it itches or stings. You could hurt your skin badly.

How do I stop my arm or leg swelling inside the cast?

Your limb (arm or leg) might swell up in the plaster cast. This often happens in the first few days. To reduce this:

- **raise your limb as high as you can.** Get it higher than your heart if possible. You can use pillows to do this while you are resting. If the cast is on your leg, you can try propping up the bottom of your mattress.
- **keep moving your fingers or toes.** This helps reduce swelling. It also keeps the blood supply flowing to the limb

When should I seek help?

Contact your GP or the plaster room in the fracture clinic immediately if you notice:

- bleeding or drainage from inside the cast
- chest pain which does not settle after resting, fever or chills
- blue or white fingers or toes
- increased pain or swelling in the limb
- burning or stinging sensation
- numbness or tingling
- calf pain (if in a leg cast)
- rubbing at the heel or elbow

Also seek help if your cast:

- becomes loose, you get an object stuck in it, or it becomes damaged
- becomes wet. A wet cast can lead to skin irritation or infection

How do I contact the plaster room?

If you notice any of the symptoms above, call:

- St Mary's Hospital – **020 3312 1871**
- Charing Cross Hospital – **020 3311 3000**

We can arrange a time for you to come in and get your cast checked. We are open from 09.00 to 17.00, Monday to Friday, and will do our best to arrange to see you either that day or the next.

Can I drive?

Do not drive while in a cast. You are unlikely to be covered by your car insurance if you have an accident. Only drive when the cast is off. Make sure you can do an emergency stop if needed.

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service. If you have **suggestions** or **comments**, please speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). Email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net. The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Or you can complain to our complaints department: Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

We can provide this leaflet on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Email the communications team: imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk