

This information will help you care for your child's cast. Please read it before leaving the Orthopaedic clinic and ask the staff about anything you are unsure of.

Your child's leg has been placed in a cast (also called a plaster) to prevent bones from moving and to allow the broken bones time to rest and heal. It is important that you care for the cast correctly, as this will increase the chances of an early recovery.

Waiting for the plaster to dry:

- A plaster of paris leg cast takes 48 hours to dry
- A fibreglass leg cast takes 30 minutes
- Whilst the cast is drying rest your child's leg on something soft, e.g. pillows.
- Avoid hard surfaces as they can damage your child's cast
- Avoid using a heater or hairdryer to make the cast dry faster, as this could burn your child's skin and/or crack the plaster

Guidelines do's:

- Encourage your child to move their toes for 5 minutes every hour
- Encourage your child to move their knee joint (above the cast) for 5 minutes every hour as this will help to prevent knee joint stiffness
- Check the colour of your child's toes. They should be pink and warm. Squeeze the nail white, then release. The nail should immediately return to a pink colour.
- Check for swelling by comparing the foot in the cast to the other foot. They should be the same size.
- In the first week after the injury it is important to give your child regular pain relief as instructed
- Keep the cast clean and dry (See the heading showering and bathing)

- Your child should use their crutches as instructed, and bring them to their clinic visit even if they are not using them to walk with
- **Telephone the Orthopaedic clinic for an appointment if the plaster becomes loose, cracks, softens or is rubbing or uncomfortable.**

Guideline Don'ts:

- Avoid resting your child's plaster on a hard surface until it is completely dry.
- DO NOT poke anything down the plaster as this may cause damage.
- DO NOT remove the plaster, trim it or make any adjustments to it.
- If the plaster is causing your child problems you need to telephone the Orthopaedic clinic for advice or an appointment.
- DO NOT let your child walk on their plaster unless they have been instructed to do so.

Bathing and Showering:

The cast is not waterproof so it is important that you keep it dry during bathing and showering.

- You can wrap a towel around the cast and place your child's leg in a plastic bag, large enough to cover the cast. Make sure the bag does not have any holes in it. Use masking tape or cello tape to secure the bag.
- You can place your child's leg on the edge of the bath or on a stool outside the shower so that they can have a wash.
- You may wish to purchase a shaped latex cast to cover the plaster for bathing and showering. Please ask the Orthopaedic Clinic Nurse for more information about this.

Clothing:

Your child will be able to wear any clothing that can easily be put on and off. You may wish to add a zip or Velcro to the seam to allow your child to wear long trousers.

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If a walking sole is added to your child's cast, it will become wider at the foot and they may not be able to wear the same trousers they wore before their injury.

Because the cast may need to be changed when your child is attending their Orthopaedic clinic appointment it is important that they wear either trousers with wide legs or a skirt.

When should I seek help?

Immediately telephone Wellington Orthopaedic Clinic/Kenepuru Outpatients (during clinic hours) OR the Emergency Department (if after hours) if your child has:

- Severe or increasing pain under the cast which is not helped by pain relief
- A very swollen foot which does not decrease after the leg in the cast has been up on pillows for 20 minutes
- A change in temperature OR colour of your child's leg. A hot foot with purple or red toes OR a cold foot which is dusky coloured or white.
- Numbness or tingling in their toes or your child cannot move or straighten their toes
- Cramping pain in their calf muscle.
- If your child has a wound under the plaster AND they complain of increase pain, have a temperature, the cast smells bad or you notice ooze (discharge) from the cast.

Telephone during clinic hours (see contact details) if your child has:

- A soft or cracked plaster
- Rubbing or the cast is uncomfortable
- The cast has become loose

Follow-up appointments:

Your child will be given an Orthopaedic clinic appointment so that their injury can be reviewed for progress.

It is important that your child returns for their follow-up appointments.

An X-Ray is taken to make sure that the bone is healing and in the correct place. This may be followed up with several appointments before the

cast is removed.

Removing your child's cast:

Cast removal is a fast and painless process.

The cast will be removed with a specially designed saw which cuts through the cast, but will not cut the skin.

Following removal of the cast:

- Your child may experience increase pain or swelling.
- Your child will need to use their crutches for some time.
- Your child's doctor will discuss exercises with you and your child may need to attend physiotherapy.
- Your child should not return to school or sporting activity until instructed to do so

Contact us:

Remember If your child does not have an appointment, always phone before coming to Orthopaedic clinic.

Wellington Hospital Orthopaedic Clinic

Phone (04) 385 5952 Fax (04) 385 5953

Hours of opening: Monday – Friday (excluding Public Holidays) 8am - 5.30pm

Outside of these hours please contact the Wellington Hospital Emergency Department
Phone (04) 385 5999 Ext 5432

Kenepuru Hospital Outpatients

Phone (04) 385 5999 Ext 7205

Hours of opening: Monday – Friday (excluding Public Holidays) 8am - 5pm

Outside of these hours please contact the Wellington Hospital Emergency Department
Phone (04) 385 5999 Ext 5432

Can't keep your outpatient appointment?

Please phone us on 0800 999 442 and let us know as soon as possible.