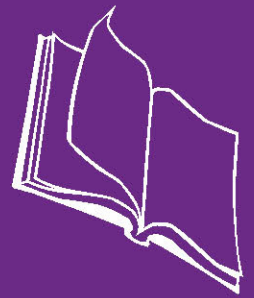


**The
Emily
Center**



Spica Cast Care

#788

Name of Child: _____ Date: _____

Spica Cast Care

What is a spica cast?

Spica is a type of bandage that holds an arm or leg in place. A **spica cast** is a large cast that is put on after a bone is broken, or after surgery. It may cover only one leg, or both legs. It keeps your child's hips and legs from moving. It keeps them in the right position for healing.



A spica cast may cover only one leg, or both legs. It keeps your child's hips and legs from moving.

Your doctor will decide how long the cast will stay on your child. X-rays will show the doctor how the bone is healing. The doctor will let you know when the cast can come off.

What about moving my child in the spica cast?

If the cast leans on your child's skin in one place too long, the pressure can cause a sore. If you move your child often, you can keep these sores from forming.

- Turn the whole child at once.
- If there is a bar between the two legs of the cast, never hold the bar to move your child. Hold your child, instead.
- Turn your child every 2 to 4 hours during the day, and 1 to 2 times during the night. So you don't forget to turn your child, set an alarm clock.
- If one leg is in the cast, turn your child toward the leg not in the cast.

- If both legs are in the cast, turn your child from back to stomach, or stomach to back.
- Your child may lie on his or her back, sides, or stomach.
- Keep the body straight, so the chest and shoulder blades don't press on the cast.
- yes no Your child's head should always be higher than the legs. You can do this with pillows, or by raising the end of the mattress at the head.
- yes no Your child's feet and legs should always be higher than the heart. You can do this with pillows, or by raising the end of the mattress at the feet.
- Use pillows, rolled towels, or rolled wash cloths to keep pressure off the cast edges. Your child's ankles, heels, and toes should move freely.
- You may find it easy to keep your child in the crib, in bed, on a beanbag chair, or on an outdoor lounge chair.

What should my child wear with the spica cast?

The child will be most comfortable if kept cool. Your child may not need many clothes.

For a younger child, a t-shirt, nightshirt, or loose dress may be the only clothes your child needs. You can also use a one-piece outfit (Onesies) that is put on over the head and closes over the legs.

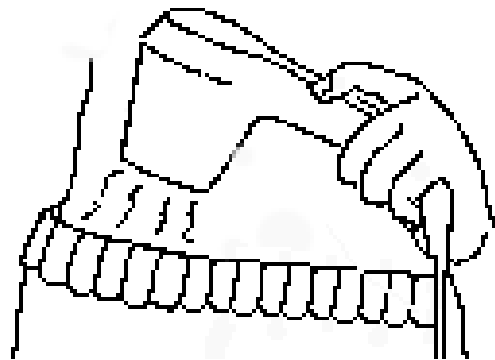
An older child may want to wear clothes that cover the cast more. Once the cast is dry, you may cover the cast with clothes. Your child may wear big t-shirts, boxer shorts, and loose dresses.

If you can sew, you can fix pants, shorts, or underwear so your child can wear them. Split the seams on the sides, and sew in hook-and-loop strips (Velcro), or snaps on the seam. When open, you can slide the clothes over the cast.

How do I take care of my child's skin?

It is much easier to prevent a skin sore from pressure, than to heal it. There are many things you can do from keep the cast from causing sores on your child's skin.

- Every day, wash and dry all of your child's skin you can reach.
- Twice a day, rub body lotion on your child's back and skin by the cast edges.
Do not put lotion under the cast. It will make the cast wet.
- Do not use powder. It makes lumps under the cast.
- You may tap very little cornstarch on your child's skin at the edges of the cast.
- You may use a hair dryer to blow cool or cold air under the cast edges.
Make sure the dryer air is cool. Warm or hot settings can cause burns.
- Do not put cotton on the edges of the cast. It will press on your child's skin, and cause a sore.
- Do not put anything under the cast. A scratch on the skin under the cast can get infected. If your child's skin itches a lot under the cast, call the doctor.
- Look at your child's skin as you wash, dry, and put lotion on it. Check all the cast edges, especially at the back and ankles. Check the feet and toes. Use a flashlight if you need more light. Look for redness, blisters, and sores.
- If any spot is red, keep it from getting sore. Keep the skin clean and dry, change your child's position often, and check the cast for rough edges.



You may use a hair dryer to blow cool or cold air under the cast edges.

- Call the doctor if the skin is sore, or the cast smells badly. Call the doctor if your child has pain that medicine doesn't help, or if your child has a fever of 101°F or more for more than 24 hours.

How do I change the diaper of my child in the spica cast?

You can help keep your child's skin healthy by keeping urine from soaking the cast. It is very hard to get the smell of urine out of the cast, once it is soaked.

- Change diapers as soon as they get wet or soiled.
- Your child's head should always be higher than the legs. This helps the urine and stool flow down, away from the cast.
- Use disposable diapers.
- Check diapers every 1 to 2 hours when your child is awake, and 1 or 2 times during the night. So you don't forget to check diapers, set an alarm clock.
- You may place your child on the back or stomach when you change the diaper.

To change the diaper:

1. Tuck a sanitary pad (such as a Kotex pad) or a small diaper inside the edges of the cast, over your child's bottom.
2. Place a diaper over the pad. This diaper may be a size smaller than your child usually uses.
3. Tuck the edges of the diaper inside the edges of the cast. Make sure the diaper is flat. Keep the plastic of the diaper (the waterproof edges) between the child and the cast.



**Tuck the edges
of the diaper inside
the edges of the cast.**

4. You may put a larger diaper over the diaper tucked into the cast. For a larger child, you may use an adult pad for incontinence (such as Poise or Serenity).
5. Close the diaper tabs around the waist of the cast.

If the cast gets wet, use a blow dryer on the cool setting to completely dry the cast.

How do I help my child use a bedpan or urinal in a spica cast?

If your child is toilet trained, he or she can use a bedpan or urinal. When your child's head is higher than his or her feet, it is easier to toilet.

A girl can use a urinal if you hold it firmly against her body. You can use toilet paper to help a girl urinate in a bedpan without splashing. Hold one end of the toilet paper between her legs, and hang the other end in the bedpan below. The urine will flow down the paper.

After your child uses the bedpan or urinal, clean and dry your child's bottom. Make sure the sheets and your child's clothing is clean and dry, too.

Cover your child's bottom with a wash cloth or hand towel, tucked between the cast and the skin.

How can I keep my child clean?

Wash your child's skin with a wash cloth, soap, and water every day. Do not get the cast wet. Do not put anything under the cast, even lotions, powders, or oils.

If your child sweats a lot, you may put a thin, soft dry cloth between the cast and the skin. Change the cloth when it gets wet.

How do I take care of the cast?

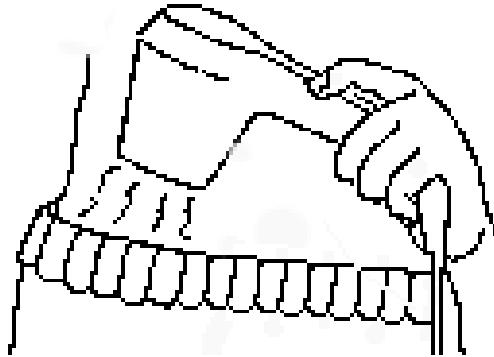
A plaster cast takes at least 48 hours to dry all the way through.

A fiberglass cast takes about 2 hours to dry all the way through.

If the cast gets wet, use a blow dryer on the cool setting to completely dry the cast. If the cast is soaked through to the padding, call the doctor's office.

If stool soils the cast, clean the cast carefully with a washcloth, mild soap, and water. Then use a blow dryer on the cool setting to completely dry the cast.

The edges of the cast can be rough. You can protect your child's skin by filing it smooth with a metal file, or padding the edges of the cast. This padding is called **petaling**.



You may use a hair dryer to blow cool or cold air under the cast edges.

To petal the cast, you will need:

- cloth tape or moleskin
- scissors

1. Cut a strip of tape or moleskin, 2 inches wide and 4 inches long. If your child is sensitive to latex, use a tape that is latex-free.

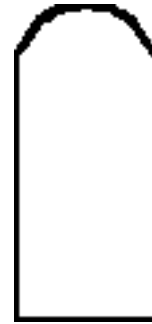
2. Cut one end of the tape or moleskin round.

3. Put the round end on the outside of the edge of the cast.

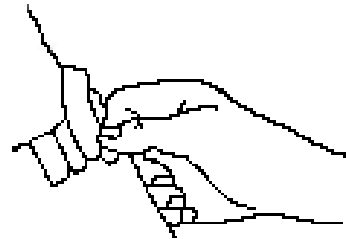
4. Tuck the straight end of the tape or moleskin inside the cast. Push down with your finger to make it smooth and flat.

5. Cut another strip of tape or moleskin, and do this again. Overlap the edge of each strip, to make a smooth edge.

6. Do this until the whole edge of the cast is padded.



Cut one end of the tape or moleskin round.



Put the round end on the outside of the edge of the cast.



Tuck the straight end of the tape or moleskin inside the cast.

Should I feed my child any differently?

Because the cast covers the belly, your child may be more comfortable eating small meals, several times a day. Your child may find it easiest to eat by lying on his or her stomach, with a pillow holding the chest up, looking down on the plate.

Because your child can not be very active in the spica cast, he or she may be more likely to get hard, dry stool (**constipation**). You can prevent this by giving your child lots of fluids to drink, and feeding foods high in fiber, like fruits, vegetables, and whole grain cereals and breads.

If you want to learn more, ask your nurse or doctor for the handout, **Constipation (#8)**.

What can my child do in the spica cast?

Your child can do anything that does not include standing or walking, and that does not wet or break the cast. Your child can play with toys, make crafts, and play board games with other children. Your child can do school work, read or watch television. Make sure things are placed so your child can reach them easily. If your child will be in the spica cast while school is in session, ask the school how your child can learn while at home.

Always keep your child in a safe place, where he or she can not roll off or fall. Some children learn how to turn themselves over, push themselves across the floor, or stand in the cast. Do not let your child stand or walk in the spica cast.

How can my child travel when in a spica cast?

A small child in a spica cast can be moved in a wagon or stroller. Use pillows and a seatbelt to keep the child comfortable and safe.

A small child may be able to move around on board with wheels, like a mechanic's dolly. The child can lay on the board on his or her stomach, and use his or her arms to move around.

An older child or teen can move around in a wheelchair that can recline. Your nurse, doctor, or health insurance company can tell you where you can rent a wheelchair.

You can also travel in the car, if there's room to lie down. Ask your child's nurse or doctor how you can get a special car seat or safety vest.

What do I look for to make sure everything is all right?

At breakfast, lunch, and dinner time, and before bed:

- Check to make sure the blood is flowing well to your child's feet. Press your child's toenail until the nailbed turns white. Let go. The nailbed should turn pink again within 2 seconds. Do this on the other foot, too. Toes should be pink and warm to the touch.
- When you touch all sides of your child's toes, your child should feel it.
- Your child should be able to wiggle the toes as well as he or she could have before casting.
- To check for swelling, the space between your child's skin and the cast should stay the same. The cast should not get tighter.
- If the blood is not flowing well to your child's feet, they may be cooler than they should be, or your child may complain of numbness or tingling.
- If you find any of these problems, change your child's position to help the blood flow better. If this does not fix the problem, call your child's doctor.

Once a day:

- Check the cast for cracks and dents.



When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor right away if:

- toes are cold to the touch or look pale or blue.
- toes get very swollen.
- your child cannot move toes.
- your child complains of tingling or numbness of toes.
- your child has a fever over 101° F or throws up for more than 24 hours.
- the cast doesn't fit the way it used to, it slips.
- a bad smell comes from the cast.
- a stain appears on the cast that wasn't there before.
- your child has pain that does not get better with change of position or acetaminophen (Tylenol).
- your child complains the cast hurts or burns
- your baby is always fussy, won't calm down, and you can't tell why
- the skin near the edges of the cast gets red, sore, or forms blisters
- something falls into the cast and gets stuck there
- the cast breaks, cracks, or gets soft

How can I keep my child safe in the spica cast?

If possible, keep your child on the floor at street-level in case of fire. You may move your child's bed, so your child can sleep downstairs until the cast is off.

Keep side rails up on cribs.

Use safety belts on strollers and highchairs.

Use a bib or t-shirt to keep small things, like coins, crumbs, or parts of toys from getting under the cast.

Do not poke objects under the cast to scratch an itch. A scratch on the skin under the cast can get infected. If your child's skin itches a lot under the cast, call the doctor. You may use a hair dryer to blow cool or cold air under the cast edges.

Now that you've read this:

- Tell your nurse or doctor how you will care for your child's skin around the spica cast. (Check when done.)
- Tell your nurse or doctor why it is important to keep the cast clean and dry, and how you will do this. (Check when done.)
- Show your nurse or doctor how you will move your child with the spica cast, and how you use pillows and towels to keep pressure off the skin. (Check when done.)
- Show your nurse or doctor how you will change your child's diaper, or help your child use a bedpan and urinal. (Check when done.)
- Tell your nurse or doctor what you need to check, how, and when you will call the doctor. (Check when done.)
- Tell your nurse or doctor when you will bring your child back to the doctor's office for a follow-up visit, and why. (Check when done.)



If you have any questions or concerns,

- call your child's doctor or call _____

If you want to know more about child health and illness,
visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children's Hospital
1919 East Thomas Road
Phoenix, AZ 85016
602-546-1400
www.phoenixchildrenshospital.com

Disclaimer

The information provided at this site is intended to be general information, and is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of examination, treatment, or consultation with a physician. Phoenix Children's Hospital urges you to contact your physician with any questions you may have about a medical condition.

Monday, December 29, 2008 • DRAFT to family review
#788 • Written by Fran London, MS, RN • Illustrated by Dennis Swain



Name of Health Care Provider: _____ Number: 788
For office use: Date returned: _____ db nb

Family Review of Handout

Health care providers: Please teach families with this handout.

Families: Please let us know what you think of this handout.

Would you say this handout is hard to read? Yes No

easy to read? Yes No

Please circle the parts of the handout that were hard to understand.

Would you say this handout is interesting to read? Yes No

Why or why not?

Would you do anything differently after reading
this handout? Yes No

If yes, what?

After reading this handout, do you have any
questions about the subject? Yes No

If yes, what?

Is there anything you don't like about the drawings?

Yes No

If yes, what?

What changes would you make in this handout to make it better or easier to understand?

Please return your review of this handout to your nurse or doctor or send it to the address below.

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Thank you for helping us!