

# Plaster of Paris

**This leaflet offers more information about Plaster of Paris. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your care.**

## What is Plaster of Paris and why has it been used?

Plaster of Paris is the hard casing that makes up a plaster cast. It is used when a bone is broken to help it heal by holding it in place.

It takes 24 hours for the cast to set fully.

Depending on which bone is broken, the cast will need to stay on between 4 to 12 weeks. Taking good care of the plaster will ensure a better recovery.

## What sorts of symptoms can I expect initially?

There may be some itchiness on the skin that is covered by the cast. It may feel quite heavy initially as your body gets used to carrying around the extra weight.

## How do I look after my plaster cast?

There are a few things to help the plaster cast do the best job at healing the broken bone:

- Keep it elevated for as long as possible during the first few days to help reduce the swelling caused by the first injury.
- Do not get it wet as this will weaken the cast – covers can be purchased from a pharmacy (please ask their guidance on this).
- Remove covers as soon as you have finished washing to avoid causing sweating.
- Do not poke anything under the cast if the skin is itchy as this can cause sores and then infections of the skin underneath. Blow cool air on the skin to relieve the itchiness.
- Do not trim or file your cast.
- Exercise any joints outside the cast (fingers and toes) to help with circulation and swelling.
- Use paracetamol (Calpol) as needed for pain.
- Avoid any strenuous exercise that may damage the cast (or bone).

## Are there any complications of Plaster of Paris?

As with any medical intervention there are some complications with a plaster cast. They are uncommon but nonetheless serious. These include:

- Blood clot (deep vein thrombosis)
- Compartment syndrome – painful condition that occurs when pressure within the muscles builds
- Soft tissue swelling
- Pressure sores
- Venous congestion – slowing of blood flow due to pressure/swelling.

## When should I seek further medical help?

Seek advice if your child experiences the following:

- Cast feels too tight or too loose
- Pain that does not settle with paracetamol/ibuprofen
- Persistent itching or burning sensation under the cast
- Fingers or toes become swollen, painful, tingly or numb
- Fingers or toes turn white or blue
- The cast is broken or damaged
- Unpleasant smell or discharge from the cast.

If any of the above develop please contact 111 or the emergency department/fracture clinic directly.

## Are there any long-term complications with Plaster of Paris?

Understandably, if a part of the body has been immobilised for a long period of time, then the muscles will weaken and become smaller as they haven't been used for a while. Do not worry, the strength can be quickly regained by simply using it again or with the support of a physiotherapist. Movement and weight bearing should be gently re-introduced to prevent strains and further injuries to the muscles and tendons.

## For how long will I have the cast?

This is all based on the bone in which you have broken and larger bones will be in a cast for longer. As a general rule, the larger the bone the longer it will take.

Arm/wrist ~4 weeks

Leg/ankle ~8 weeks

## What is the follow-up?

Your child will be seen in fracture clinic in a couple of weeks. Please ensure you have booked your appointment with Emergency Department reception on your way out of the department.

## Useful sources of information

- NHS [How should I care for my plaster cast?](#)
- Advanced Ortho [Cast Care](#)
- [Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children](#)

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Emergency Department on 020 8725 2666 and ask to be put through to the Paediatric Emergency Department.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)

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## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health. **Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones. **Tel:** 111

### AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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