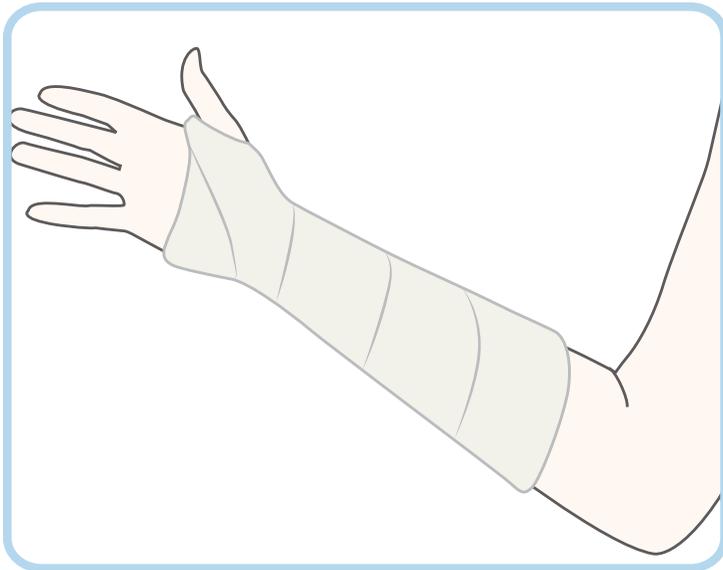


Cast care



 Office d'éducation des patients du CUSM
MUHC Patient Education Office



This material is also available on the
MUHC Health Education Collection (<http://infotheque.muhc.ca/>)
MUHC Patient Education Office (www.muhcpatienteducation.ca).

This material was developed by the McGill
University Health Centre Emergency Department.

What is wrong?

You have a broken bone. To help it heal and decrease the pain, you have a cast to hold the bone in place. The cast may also immobilize the joint above or below the break to make sure there is no movement of the injured part.

What should I do at home?

Take good care of the cast. A broken cast can prevent the bone from healing or cause more damage.

- ▶ Keep the cast dry so it does not lose its shape or fall apart. If you take a bath or shower, make sure to keep it out of the water. You may wrap it with plastic bags and tape the opening so water does not get in. Never immerse it in water. If it gets a bit wet by accident, use a hairdryer set on “cool” (never “hot”) to help it dry.
- ▶ Elevate the cast on pillows above the level of your heart, for 30 minutes, 3 times a day. It will help decrease the swelling.
- ▶ Move your fingers or toes to keep the blood circulation going.
- ▶ Protect the cast and your exposed fingers or toes if you go out in the rain, snow or in cold weather.
- ▶ If the skin under the cast gets itchy, do not put lotion or powder. Do not scratch underneath the cast. You can try blowing cool air (never hot) with a hairdryer inside the cast.
- ▶ Do not try to remove, cut or trim the cast. Put tape at the ends if it is rubbing on your skin.

When am I going to feel better?

- ▶ The pain will improve when the swelling goes down and the bone starts to heal.
- ▶ A bone takes approximately 6 weeks to heal, sometimes longer.
- ▶ The cast usually stays on until the bone is healed.

Should I see another doctor?

You will be referred to a specialist (orthopaedic or plastic surgeon) who will follow you until the bone is healed properly.

When should I come back to the Emergency Department?

You should return right away if:

- ▶ You have pain or swelling that is not relieved by elevating the cast above the level of your heart.
- ▶ The toes or fingers below your cast become bluish, pale, cold or feel numb and tingly.
- ▶ The cast is broken or cracked.

Notes