

Metrocrest Orthopaedics and Sports Medicine

Extremity Injuries and Cast Care Instructions

1. Please call the office for an appointment with the physician who treated you in the emergency room of the hospital. It is more important that this be done as soon as possible. The appointment desk is open from 8:30 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday. The injury should be checked in the office in 2-5 days unless instructed otherwise.
2. The injured extremity (arm or Leg) should be kept elevated above the heart as much as possible.
 - A. **ARMS** – Wrap pillow around arm and attach the two corners with tape, rubber bands or safety pins. This makes a triangle of the bottom of the pillow and allows elevation while sleeping.
 - B. **LEGS** – Should be elevated on pillow with the injury higher than the heart to allow circulatory drainage using gravity to avoid excess swelling. Crutches may be necessary for ambulation. Too much activity will probably increase swelling and pain. Stay down with extremity elevated as much as possible.
 - C. **SWELLING AND PAIN** – Ice will help reduce swelling and pain in tissues around the injury. Wrap ice (Zip Loc bag) in a dish towel – this will keep the cast from getting wet and the cold will penetrate the cast and feel better.
3. There are several signs and symptoms that are extremely important in telling the doctor whether or not the cast is too tight. It is extremely important that you read these carefully and understand them. If there are any questions, call the doctor. These are the signs:
 - A. **PAIN** – If severe and excessive pain begins two or three hours after the injury, the doctor should be notified. Ordinarily children will have less pain than adults and generally their pain can be controlled by Advil or Tylenol. If Advil or Tylenol every four hours does not adequately relieve the pain notify the doctor.
 - B. **SWELLING OF THE FINGERS OR TOES** – We always anticipate a certain amount of swelling in the fingers and toes but an excessive amount of swelling indicates that the cast is too tight. An excessive amount of swelling would be indicated by comparing the normal side to the side that is injured. If there is excessive swelling, the doctor should be notified. Elevation of the extremity and ice will help control swelling.
 - C. **COLOR** – Normally, after a fracture, we see a certain amount of discoloration of the fingers or toes on the affected side. When the toes or fingers become excessively dusky, dark, or blue, the doctor should be notified immediately.
 - D. **TEMPERATURE OF THE FINGERS OR TOES** – If there is excessive tightness of the cast, the temperature of the fingers and toes on the injured side would be much cooler than on the normal side. If excessive coolness of fingers or toes occurs, the doctor should be notified immediately.
 - E. **SENSATION** – Normally there is good sensation in the fingers or toes on the fractured side. This can be checked by comparing it to the other side. If there is decreased sensation or numbness to touch in the fingers or toes then the doctor should be notified.
4. If anything is lost in the cast such as a pencil, coat hanger, stones, beads or coins the doctor should be notified. These have been known to cause rather severe sores if left in the cast too long. The cast may need to be changed.

5. For the above reasons, it is inadvisable to scratch inside the cast using any type of item. Using a vacuum cleaner attachment to the top or bottom of the cast to circulate air is a good way to relieve itching. This is the only permissible way to relieve itching.
6. Care if the Cast is as follows.
 - A. The cast should not be allowed to get wet. Although we wet the plaster initially in application, it certainly does not tolerate a second wetting. The cast will crumble and deteriorate. Please avoid getting a plaster cast wet by using a plastic bag or some other suitable protectant during rainy weather and while taking a bath.
 - B. Although the cast may be of a plastic or fiberglass type and essentially waterproof, the padding underneath, if allowed to become wet, can cause a severe rash and/or blistering of skin beneath the cast which could cause sores and possible infection of skin under the cast. For this reason, it is suggested all types of casts are kept dry. If there is a problem or question in this regard, call your doctor for advice.
7. The cast will sometimes crack or break. In that case it may need to be repaired or replaces. Contact the doctor for advice in this matter.
8. A cast or splints are necessary for certain types of injuries. Do not take the cast or splint off yourself. Our doctors cannot be responsible for your care if this occurs.
9. Pain usually accompanies injuries. The suggestions above are designed to avoid or help control excessive discomfort. The fact of the injury cannot be changed. Too much medication will hide symptoms the doctor should be made aware of. Usually, Advil or Tylenol will be sufficient to control discomfort along with elevation and ice.
10. The phones at Metrocrest Orthopaedics and Sports Medicine are answered 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. If there is a problem, do not hesitate to call.
11. When you call to make an appointment, please indicate which physician you would like to see.

Thank You.