

Rehabilitation

Broken bones take several weeks to several months to heal. Pain usually stops long before the bone is solid enough to handle the stresses of everyday activities. You will need to wear your cast or splint until your bone is fully healed and can support itself.

While you are wearing your cast or splint, you will likely lose muscle strength in the injured area. Exercises during the healing process and after your cast is removed are important. They will help you restore normal muscle strength, joint motion, and flexibility.



Dr. Rela Institute & Medical Centre is a multi-specialty quaternary care hospital located in Chennai, India.

The Institute is within the campus of Sree Balaji Medical College and Hospital, which is spread across 36 acres. It has 14 operating theatres with 450 beds, inclusive of 150 critical care beds.

The Institute is conveniently located 10 minutes from the Domestic and International Airport.

The hospital is designed to provide highly specialized care in various departments with a focus on multi-organ transplantation. Prof. Mohamed Rela, a world renowned surgeon in the field of Liver surgery and transplantation is the Chairman and Managing Director of the Institute.

In addition to quaternary & quality care, is also committed to provide day to day primary and secondary care to the local population, with facilities of international standards.

The Institute would provide comprehensive support to international patients travelling for medical treatment such as language assistance, stay, visa and travel.

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DR. RELA INSTITUTE & MEDICAL CENTRE
An International Medical Facility



CAST OR SPLINT

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LOOKING AFTER YOUR CAST OR SPLINT

This leaflet is for patients who have been given a cast or splint. It provides information on how to look after your cast or splint and advice on how often you need to wear it.

WHAT IS A CAST OR SPLINT?

A cast or splint is a rigid support to protect injured bones or soft tissues such as tendons, ligaments and nerves. Some casts and splints are custom made to fit the exact shape of your injured limb, however some splints are off-the-shelf and secure with Velcro, making them easy to take on and off. Your doctor will advise you on which cast/splint is appropriate for your injury.

In some cases, splints and casts are applied following surgery.

Splints or "half-casts" provide less support than casts. However, splints can be adjusted to accommodate swelling from injuries easier than enclosed casts. Your doctor will decide which type of support is best for you.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF SPLINTS AND CASTS

Casts are custom-made. They must fit the shape of your injured limb correctly to provide the best support. Casts can be made of plaster or fiberglass — a plastic that can be shaped.

HOW TO CHOOSE WHAT MATERIAL TO BE USED?

Fiberglass or plaster materials form the hard supportive layer in splints and casts.

Fiberglass is lighter in weight and stronger than plaster. In addition, x-rays can "see through" fiberglass better than through plaster. This is important because your doctor will probably schedule additional x-rays after your splint or cast has been applied. X-rays can show whether the bones are healing well or have moved out of place.

Plaster is less expensive than fiberglass and shapes better than fiberglass for some uses

HOW IT IS APPLIED?

Both fiberglass and plaster splints and casts use padding, usually cotton, as a protective layer next to the skin. Both materials come in strips or rolls which are dipped in water and applied over the padding covering the injured area.

The splint or cast must fit the shape of the injured arm or leg correctly to provide the best possible support. Generally, the splint or cast also covers the joint above and below the broken bone.

In many cases, a splint is applied to a fresh injury first. As swelling subsides, a full cast may replace the splint.

Sometimes, it may be necessary to replace a cast as swelling goes down and the cast gets "too big." As a fracture heals, the cast may be replaced by a splint to make it easier to perform physical therapy exercises.

WHY DOES MY CAST FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE?

It is not unusual for cast to feel snug at first. It is very important to keep the swelling down. This will lessen pain and help your injury heal. To help reduce swelling:

Elevate It is very important to elevate your injured arm or leg for the first 24 to 72 hours. Prop your injured arm or leg up above your heart by putting it on pillows or some other support. You will have to recline if the splint or cast is on your leg. Elevation allows clear fluid and blood to drain "downhill" to your heart.

Exercise Move your uninjured, but swollen fingers or toes gently and often. Moving them often will prevent stiffness.

Ice Apply ice to the splint or cast if applicable

Are there any warning Signs I need to be aware of?

If you experience any of the following symptoms, contact your doctor's office immediately for advice.

Increased pain and the feeling that the splint or cast is too tight. This may be caused by swelling.

Numbness and tingling in your hand or foot This may be caused by too much pressure on the nerves.

Burning and stinging This may be caused by too much pressure on the skin.

Excessive swelling below the cast This may mean the cast is slowing your blood circulation.

Loss of active movement of toes or fingers This requires an urgent evaluation by your doctor.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR SPLINT OR CAST

The following information provides general guidelines only, and is not a substitute for your doctor's advice. This will help your recovery.

Keep your splint or cast dry Moisture weakens plaster and damp padding next to the skin can cause irritation. Use two layers of plastic or purchase waterproof shields to keep your splint or cast dry while you shower or bathe. Even if the cast is covered, do not submerge it or hold it under running water. A small pinhole in the cast cover can cause the injury to get soaked.

Walking casts Do not walk on a "walking cast" until it is completely dry and hard. It takes about one hour for fiberglass, and two to three days for plaster to become hard enough to walk on.

Avoid dirt Keep dirt, sand, and powder away from the inside of your splint or cast.

Padding Do not pull out the padding from your splint or cast.

Itching Do not stick objects such as coat hangers inside the splint or cast to scratch itching skin. Do not apply powders or deodorants to

Itching skin If itching persists, contact your doctor.

Trimming Do not break off rough edges of the cast or trim the cast before asking your doctor.

Skin Inspect the skin around the cast. If your skin becomes red or raw around the cast, contact your doctor.

Inspect the cast regularly If it becomes cracked or develops soft spots, contact your doctor's office.

After the initial swelling has subsided, proper splint or cast support will usually allow you to continue your daily activities with a minimum of inconvenience.

Will it hurt during cast removal?

Never remove the cast yourself. You may cut your skin or prevent proper healing of your injury.

Your doctor will use a cast saw to remove your cast. The saw vibrates, but does not rotate. If the blade of the saw touches the padding inside the hard shell of the cast, the padding will vibrate with the blade and will protect your skin. Cast saws make noise and may feel "hot" from friction, but will not harm you — "their bark is worse than their bite."

If you do feel pain while the cast is being removed, let your doctor or an assistant know and they will be able to make adjustments.