

Information to be given to patients in casts

Introduction

Below are examples of information leaflets that could be issued to patients in casts.

Before being issued, these should be agreed and if necessary modified for local use.

These handouts were modified from originals published in Royal College of Nursing (2000) *A Framework for Casting Standards* RCN Publishing Company code number 001 234

INSTRUCTIONS TO PATIENTS IN CASTS

Please read the following instructions carefully

Contact the Doctor or Hospital **immediately** if you experience any of the following:

- The toes or fingers become **blue** or **swollen** or you are unable to move the limb.
- The limb becomes more **painful**
- You feel “**pins and needles**” or **numbness**
- Any “**blister like pain**” or rubbing under the cast
- **Discharge, wetness or smell** under the cast
- If you drop any object down inside the cast

CARE

Exercise all of the joints not held in the cast as much as possible.

Do not let the limb hang down unless it is being used; **elevate** the limb especially during the first few days.

Allow the cast to dry naturally and leave it uncovered for 48 hours.

Do not sit close to the fire, as your cast may become hot and burn you

Do not wet the cast, it may disintegrate or cause skin problems

If the cast becomes **cracked, soft, loose or tight** contact the doctor or the hospital.

*The contact numbers are:- Day.....
Night*

I confirm that I have received a copy of “Instructions to Patients in Casts”.

NAME (capital letters please)

..... DOB.....

Signed.....

Date.....

SHOULDER, ELBOW AND HAND EXERCISE

For patients with a below elbow cast

When wearing a below elbow slab/cast it is important that you do not allow the joints that are not in the cast to become stiff. Exercise is important to prevent this. Unless you are advised otherwise, this exercise should be gentle and not to a degree that causes you pain.

These exercises should be done at least six times every morning, noon and evening to prevent shoulder and elbow stiffness:

1. Raise your arm above your head (if necessary help it with the other hand)
2. Touch the back of your neck with your hand.
3. Touch the small of your back with your hand.
4. Straighten and bend your elbow.

Hand exercises

These exercises should be done at least 10 times an hour during the day and evening to prevent stiffness:

1. Make a fist with your fingers and thumb, relax it and then make a fist again.
2. Spread your fingers and thumb wide apart, relax and then spread them again.

Do not allow your hand to hang down for any length of time, as it may become swollen and painful. Elevate your hand to heart level when you are sitting or lying. If you have been given a sling, wear it for 24-48 hours unless you have been instructed otherwise. However, do not forget to remove the sling to do the above exercises.

If you are worried or have problems, contact the hospital where you had your slab/cast applied or go to your nearest hospital.

SHOULDER AND HAND EXERCISE

For patients with an above elbow cast

When wearing an above elbow slab/cast it is important that you do not allow the joints that are not in the cast to become stiff. Exercise is important to prevent this. Unless you are advised otherwise, this exercise should be gentle and not to a degree that causes you pain.

These exercises should be done at least six times every morning, noon and evening to prevent shoulder stiffness:

- 1 Raise your arm above your head (if necessary help it with the other hand)
- 2 Touch the back of your neck with your hand.
- 3 Touch the small of your back with your hand.

you may not be able to do 2 and 3

Hand exercises

These exercises should be done at least 10 times an hour during the day and evening to prevent stiffness:

3. Make a fist with your fingers and thumb, relax it and then make a fist again.
4. Spread your fingers and thumb wide apart, relax and then spread them again.

Do not allow your hand to hang down for any length of time, as it may become swollen and painful. Elevate your hand to heart level when you are sitting or lying. If you have been given a sling, wear it for 24-48 hours unless you have been instructed otherwise. However, do not forget to remove the sling to do the above exercises.

If you are worried or have problems, contact the hospital where you had your slab/cast applied or go to your nearest hospital.

EXERCISES FOR LOWER LIMBS

For patients in below knee casts

When wearing a below knee cast, it is important that you do not allow the joints that are not in the cast to become stiff. Exercise is important in order to prevent this. Unless you are advised otherwise, this exercise should be gentle and not to a degree that causes you pain.

These exercises should be done at least six times every morning, noon and evening to prevent stiffness:

(Depending upon the extent of your cast, you may not be able to exercise all of your leg joints)

- Bend your toes and then straighten them
- Move your leg out to the side and back, to keep your hip mobile
- Bend and straighten your knee
- Press your knee into a pillow and feel your thigh muscle tighten.

Do not allow your leg to hang down for any length of time, as it may become swollen and painful. Elevate it to heart level when you are sitting.

If you are worried or have problems, contact the hospital where you had your cast applied or go to your nearest hospital

EXERCISES FOR LOWER LIMBS

For patients in a leg cylinder cast

When wearing a leg cylinder cast, it is important that you do not allow the joints that are not in the cast to become stiff. Exercise is important in order to prevent this. Unless you are advised otherwise, this exercise should be gentle and not to a degree that causes you pain.

These exercises should be done at least six times every morning, noon and evening to prevent stiffness:

- Bend your toes and then straighten them
- Move your leg out to the side and back, to keep your hip mobile
- Exercise your ankle by pointing your toes away from you and then pulling your foot towards you
- Rotate your ankle, drawing a circle with your foot

CHECK with medical staff or physiotherapist that you are allowed to do the next exercise

- press your knee into the back of the cast and feel your thigh muscle tighten, pull your toes towards you at the same time (static quadriceps contraction)

Do not allow your leg to hang down for any length of time, as it may become swollen and painful. Elevate it to heart level when you are sitting.

If you are worried or have problems, contact the hospital where you had your cast applied or go to your nearest hospital