

# Your arm or leg in plaster

Your arm or leg has been put in a plaster cast. This leaflet explains what you can and cannot do. The leaflet also tells you when you should contact the Plaster Room (Gipskamer) or Accident and Emergency Department (Spoedeisende Hulp) and provides further relevant information.

There are two types of plaster cast:

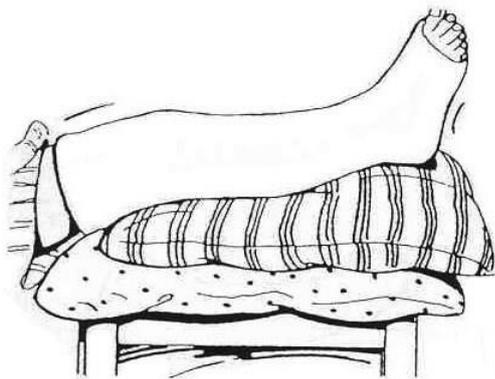
- traditional white plaster: this is usually applied when you are initially treated after an accident or operation
- synthetic plaster: this is usually applied when the swelling has reduced or when the stitches have been removed

The plaster cast can be either a:

- splint: plaster halfway around the limb
- circular plaster cast: plaster entirely around the limb

## When is the plaster hardened?

- Traditional white plaster takes two days (48 hours) to harden fully. You must therefore take extra care during the first two days. Do not rest the cast on a hard surface, but place a cushion underneath it (picture 1).
- Synthetic plaster hardens within half an hour.



picture 1



picture 2

## Your plaster cast can break!

There are a few rules to ensure your plaster cast does not break:

- A plaster splint or walking plaster cast without a sole is not designed to stand on. Always use crutches to prevent stress on the leg. You may hire or buy crutches at the Accident and Emergency Department (SEH)
- If you have been given a walking plaster cast (cast with a sole), the plaster cast technician or your attending physician will inform you whether you may walk with or without crutches.
- If you only need one crutch use it on the uninjured side.

### A plaster cast must not get wet

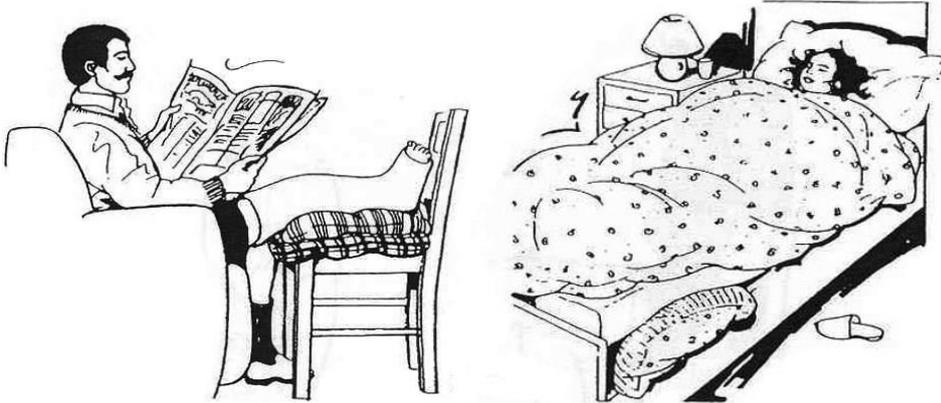
- Shower as quickly as possible and put a plastic bag over the cast. Wrap the cast in a towel first, in case the bag should leak. Seal the bag properly with sticky tape.
- Alternatively, you could use a special protective sleeve designed for showering or swimming. Ask the plaster cast technician for further information about these sleeves. The sleeves are not covered by health insurance so you will have to pay for these yourself.

### Elevate the cast

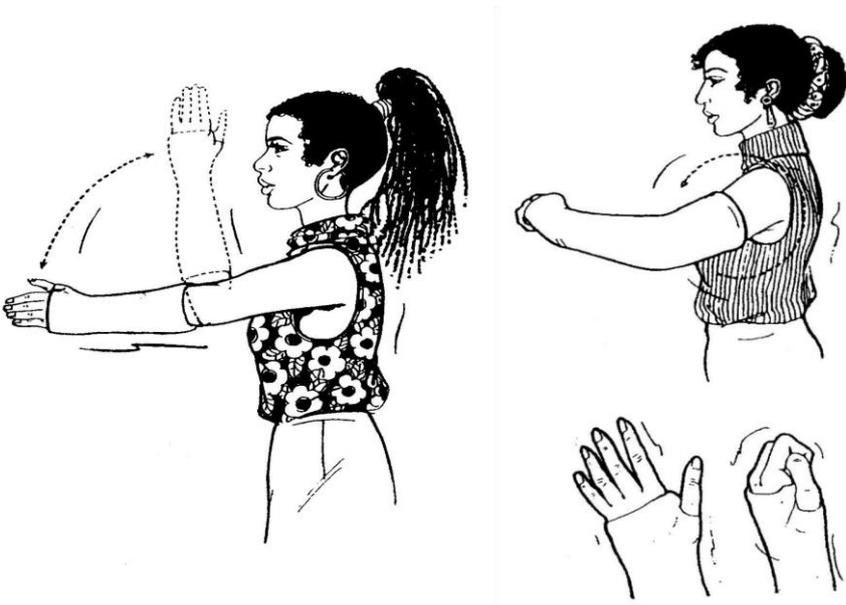
- The arm or leg in plaster may swell due to fluid retention so you should try to keep your arm or leg elevated. Your hand should be higher than your elbow (pictures 3a and 3b), and your foot should be higher than your knee and hip (pictures 3c and 3d).
- If you have been given a sling, take it off at night and rest your arm on a cushion. Make again sure that your hand is higher than your elbow.



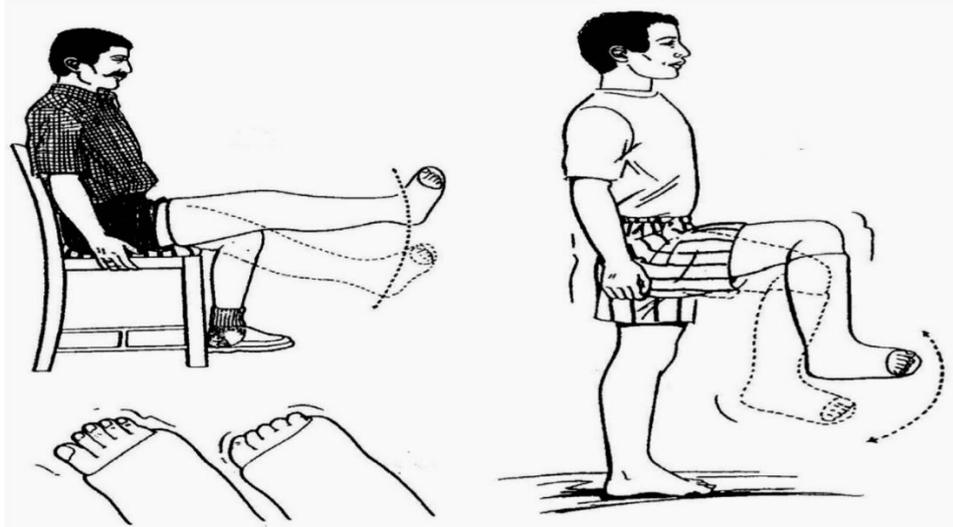
picture 3a    picture 3b



picture 3c    picture 3d



picture 4a picture 4b and 4c



picture 5a, 5b and 5c

## Exercise is important

To ensure a speedy recovery, it is important that you exercise the arm or leg in plaster. This stimulates the blood flow and keeps the muscles strong. Try to repeat the following exercises at least five times and the whole series of exercises a few times a day.

### Exercises for an arm in plaster

- Stretch and bend your elbow (if not in plaster) (picture 4a).
- Rotate your shoulder (picture 4b).
- Make a fist, count to three and then stretch your fingers (picture 4c).

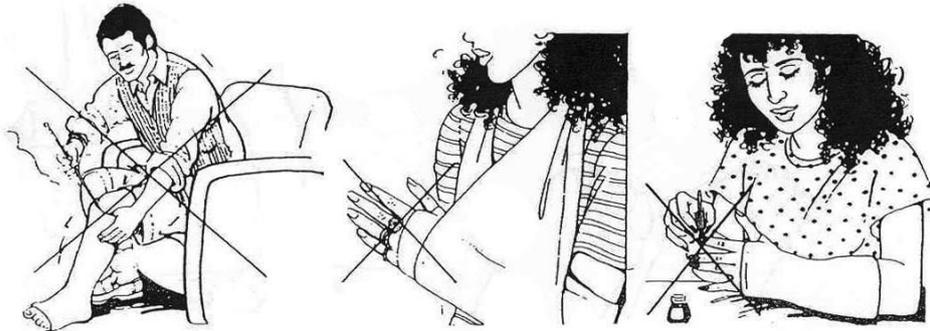
### Exercises for a leg in plaster

- Sit down, stretch out and lift your leg, count to three and lower your leg (picture 5a).
- Stand up and raise your leg with the knee bent (if not in plaster), count to three and lower your leg (picture 5b).
- Sit down with your legs stretched out and flex your toes towards you (if you do not have a toe plate), count to three and then point your toes away. Count to three again and flex your toes towards you again (picture 5c).

## Itching

- If you experience any itching, soothe it by using a hairdryer to blow air between the skin and the plaster. Do not use a hot setting: you may burn your skin.
- A special spray against itchininess is available from pharmacies.
- Do not use any sharp objects, such as a knitting needle to scratch (picture 6a). This may cause serious skin damage.
- Any small objects trapped between the plaster and the skin may also damage your skin. Children have been known to put little toys or coins inside the plaster cast.

Do not wear any rings on the fingers of an arm in plaster. The swelling may cut off circulation in your fingers (picture 6b). Do not use any nail varnish (picture 6c). Your doctor or plaster cast technician may need to look at the colour of your nails to check that the plaster is not too tight.



picture 6a, 6b and 6c

## Other recommendations

### Driving

You are not allowed to drive a vehicle if you have a plaster cast. The Road Traffic Act prohibits this. If you do not comply with this law, your third party insurer (WA) may not cover costs incurred due to an accident. Please contact your insurance company for further information.

### Air travel

- You will not be allowed to travel by air if you have a circular plaster cast! This is a plaster cast fitted entirely around the limb.
- You are allowed to travel by air with a splint plaster, which is fitted halfway around the limb.
- Some airlines allow plaster casts if they are split (sawn open). Plaster casts can not be split open at the airport!
- If your entire leg including your thigh is in plaster, you may be required to reserve two or three seats.
- Contact your airline before you are due to travel to avoid disappointment on departure.
- The airline may require a medical certificate, which can be provided by the Plaster Room.
- Travelling by air with a plaster cast is at your own risk!

## Complications

Please contact the Plaster Room if

- your fingers or toes turn blue, white or become very swollen
- your fingers or toes start to tingle and the feeling does not go away
- your fingers or toes feel either warm or cold
- you can barely move your fingers or toes
- you feel pain or tightness that does not go away (pain at the site of the break, is not usually serious)
- the plaster cast has cracked or split

- something has fallen inside the plaster cast
- the plaster cast has become wet.

## Removal of your plaster cast

- If a plaster cast is to be removed from your leg, you should bring crutches and sturdy shoes with you. You will need them at first because your muscles will have weakened. Your ankle or foot may swell up at first. This is nothing to worry about and will soon disappear. Elevating your leg will speed this up. You could also wear an elastic support stocking for a few days. The Plaster Room will provide the relevant information.
- If a plaster cast is to be removed from your arm, you should bring a sling with you. Your fingers may swell up at first. This will soon disappear if you elevate your arm.

### Problems with the cast and changing of tape (location OLVG WEST only!)

On Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday (NOT Tuesday) you can come to the plastering room between 8.00 and 8.45 am without an appointment.

After 8.45 am by appointment only!

When did you get a plaster cast?

**Date:**

**Type of plaster cast:**

	<input type="checkbox"/> traditional white plaster
	<input type="checkbox"/> synthetic plaster

## Vragen?

### U kunt ons gewoon bellen

Heeft u na het lezen van deze folder nog vragen? Neem dan contact op of kijk op [www.olvg.nl](http://www.olvg.nl) Heeft u vragen over de vergoeding of betaling? Neem dan contact op met uw zorgverzekeraar of kijk op [www.olvg.nl/zorgnota](http://www.olvg.nl/zorgnota)

### Meer informatie online

- [www.olvg.nl/gipskamer](http://www.olvg.nl/gipskamer)

**De app 'Gipskamer OLVG' is gratis te downloaden voor iPhone en Android**

### Contact

#### Gipskamer, locatie Oost

T 020 599 29 63 (ma t/m vrij 8.15 – 16.15 uur)

E [gipskamer@olvg.nl](mailto:gipskamer@olvg.nl)

P3

#### Gipskamer, locatie West

T 020 510 80 28 (ma t/m vrij 8.15 – 16.15 uur)

Route 06

**Oost**  
Oosterpark 9  
1091 AC Amsterdam

**West**  
Jan Tooropstraat 164  
1061 AE Amsterdam

**Spuistraat**  
Spuistraat 239 A  
1012 VP Amsterdam

Algemene voorwaarden: [www.olvg.nl/algemene-voorwaarden](http://www.olvg.nl/algemene-voorwaarden). Klacht of opmerking: ga naar [www.olvg.nl/klacht](http://www.olvg.nl/klacht)

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