

# Your arm or leg in plaster

## What you should and should not do, when you are treated with a cast.

There are two types of plaster cast:

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

The cast can be either a:

- A splint: plaster 2/3 around the limb
- A circular plaster cast: plaster entirely around the limb

## Elevate your arm or leg

- 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 1a and 1b), and your foot should be higher than your knee and hip (pictures 1c and 1d).
- 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.



Figure 1a



Figure 1b



Figure 1c



Figure 1d

## 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.

## 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) (pictures 2a)
- Rotate your shoulder
- Make a fist, count to three and then stretch your fingers (pictures 2b)



Figure 2a



afbeelding 2b

### Exercises for a leg in plaster

- Sit down, stretch out and lift your leg, count to three and lower your leg (pictures 3a).
- Stand up and raise your leg with the knee bent (if not in plaster), count to three and lower your leg.



Figure 3a

### 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, named Cool Talc.
- Do not use any sharp objects, such as a knitting needle to scratch. This may cause serious skin damage.
- Any small objects trapped between the plaster and the skin may also damage your skin. If this would happen, please contact the cast room.

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.

## 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

There are strict guideline for flying with a cast. As an example, you are not allowed to fly with circular cast. Due to pressure difference in the compartment. This can cause limbs to swell up. As a result of that the cast can be too tight.

If you are required to travel by air, please discuss the option with your cast technician or registered nurse. They can make an application, like a splint, brace or removable cast that is allowed by the airline guidelines. This only applies to injures which allow these kind of treatments.

### Airline guidelines

Guidelines per airline may differ. If you want to fly with a cast on your arm or leg, always inquire about the applicable rules with your airline in advance.

## 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

### Leg

- 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.

### Arm

- 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.

## Vragen?

### Stel uw vraag via MijnOLVG

U kunt ons altijd bereiken via [MijnOLVG](#). Heeft u een algemene vraag over vergoeding of betaling? Neem dan contact op met uw zorgverzekeraar of kijk op [www.olvg.nl/zorgnota](http://www.olvg.nl/zorgnota). Meer informatie over bijvoorbeeld kosten, bereikbaarheid, onderzoeken en behandelingen staat op [www.olvg.nl](http://www.olvg.nl) maar u kunt ons natuurlijk ook bellen.

### 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 (werkdagen 8.00 – 16.00 uur)

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

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#### Gipskamer, locatie West

T 020 510 80 28 (werkdagen 8.00 – 16.00 uur)

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

Route 06

#### afdeling Spoedeisende Hulp (SEH), locatie Oost

T 020 599 30 16 (dag en nacht bereikbaar)

#### afdeling Spoedeisende Hulp (SEH), locatie West

T 020 510 81 61 (dag en nacht bereikbaar)

Oost  
Oosterpark 9  
1091 AC Amsterdam

West  
Jan Tooropstraat 164  
1061 AE Amsterdam

Spuistraat  
Spuistraat 239 A  
1012 VP Amsterdam

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