

# Caring for my cast



A health professional has put a cast on your injured leg or arm.  
This sheet will help you take care of the cast.

## Why do I need a cast?

A cast keeps your injured limb completely still to help it heal.



## How long do I need to wear my cast?

How long you need to wear your cast depends on how serious your injury is.

## How long will it take for the cast to dry?

The plaster of Paris (white and most often used) dries in 24 to 48 hours. The fiberglass cast dries in 1 hour.

**Do not put pressure on the cast until it is dry.**

## What rules do I need to follow once the cast is completely dry?

- > Never get the cast wet.
- > Do not wear jewellery on the casted hand or foot.
- > Do not use the casted limb for intense activities.
- > If you have a cast on your:
  - leg: never rest your heel on a hard surface because it could injure your skin and cause a pressure ulcer
  - forearm: using a sling is not recommended

## How do I care for my injured limb?

- > Move your fingers or toes often to keep the blood flowing.
- > Work your muscles.
  - Leg cast: Squeeze your thigh muscles often.
  - Arm cast: Make a fist often.



## What can I do if I feel discomfort?

- > To prevent or reduce swelling, elevate the casted limb as often as possible. At night, rest your limb on a pillow.



- > If you get itchy and feel you need to scratch, use a hair dryer to blow cold air into the cast. Do not use a ruler or a pin to scratch yourself.

Every day, check the skin where the cast stops:

- Compare the color of the skin on the casted limb with your other limb.
- Check for signs of complications.

## Could there be complications?

Yes. Here are the signs you should look for.

- > Intense, continuous pain on the casted limb
- > Changes in the fingers or toes of the casted limb:
  - Numbness
  - No feeling
  - Cold skin
  - Abnormal color
  - Increased swelling
- > Unpleasant odour coming from the cast
- > Constant cramps or a burning sensation in the injured limb
- > Fever
- > Very uncomfortable pressure on the skin
- > Cast that becomes soft or breaks
- > Difficulty breathing or chest pain

## What do I do if there is a complication?

### BEFORE HEADING TO THE HOSPITAL

Call the Orthopedic Clinic, Monday to Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.:

> **514 890-8406**

A nurse will assess your symptoms.

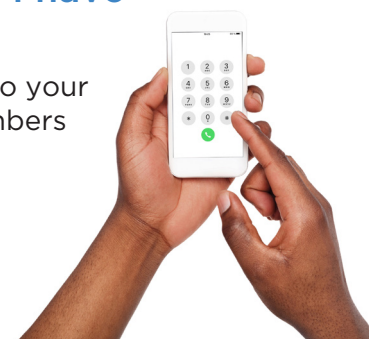
For any question related to your health, you can call a nurse at the Health Patient CHUM Hotline (ligne Santé Patient).

> **514 890-8086**

This service is available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week. When calling, be sure to have your health insurance card on hand.

## Who do I contact if I have questions?

For any question related to your health, call one of the numbers above for help.



### USEFUL RESOURCES

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our website  
**[chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante](http://chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante)**

*The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.*

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal  
**[chumontreal.qc.ca](http://chumontreal.qc.ca)**