

Health Information Sheet | Canberra Health Services

Caring for your non-waterproof cast

What is a non-waterproof cast?

- a cast is a special hard bandage that is used to keep your fractured bone still while it is healing.
- it does not work like a helmet – it will not protect your bones from further injury if you engage in rough activity or lift heavy objects.
- a non-waterproof cast has a soft padded inner lining that absorbs moisture and will stay damp if it gets wet. It is important to keep the cast dry to protect your skin.

What can't I do with a non-waterproof cast?	
✗ Get it wet	✗ Gardening
✗ Play in sand or dirt	✗ Stick objects under or inside your cast, or pull out your cast's padding
✗ Get the cast material too hot (e.g., heaters, fires, hairdryer, saunas) If the cast material becomes too hot it may cause burns to your skin underneath	✗ Heavy lifting – no heavier than a 150mls of water/drink
✗ Rough activity	✗ Fly on an airplane without having your cast split

How to wash with a non-waterproof cast:

- cover your cast with a plastic bag or cast liner and keep it away from water. You can buy a cast liner from your local pharmacy.
- you should not submerge your cast in a bath or under the shower, even if it is covered with a bag or liner.
- some people find it is easier to wash with wipes or face washers while they have a cast. Please pay special attention to the skin between your fingers or toes.

What if my cast gets wet?

- if your cast gets wet, please go to a Walk-in Centre (ACT) or local hospital or GP to make sure it does not need replacing. The skin underneath your cast can get damaged if it stays moist for too long.
- you should not use a hairdryer or heater to dry your cast. This could heat up your cast and burn your skin.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What if I am itchy under the cast?

Don't put anything inside your cast to scratch as you might damage your skin and get an infection. You might also damage your cast padding. Some people find tapping the cast at the area of the itch helps.

What if the cast is rubbing?

File the sharp edges down with a nail file or cover the sharp area with tape or a Band-Aid.

Can I use my limb while it is in a cast?

You should move all your joints that are outside of your cast often. This will stop your joints getting stiff.

- if your arm is in a cast, you can use it for gentle activities. Do not lift anything heavier than a 150mls of water/drink.
- if your leg is in a cast, you should not walk on it unless your doctor has told you it is safe to do so.
- it is not safe to drive with a cast unless you have written permission from your doctor.

Can my friends and family sign my cast?

Absolutely! Please avoid getting paint or glitter inside the cast as it will clog the padding.

Things to look out for:

If your fingers or toes are becoming swollen, please elevate them for 15-20 minutes to reduce the swelling:

- if your fingers are swollen, rest your hand above the level of your heart.
- if your toes are swollen, rest your foot on a chair or pillow above the level of your hip. If the swelling does not go down, please seek medical advice.



Seek medical advice if you have:

- pain, swelling, numbness or tingling in the limb
- skin problems/rash/wound at the edge of your cast
- an unpleasant smell coming from your cast
- any questions about your cast
- a fever (temperature above 38oC)
- a cast that is:
 - very dirty
 - coming apart
 - too loose

Where can I go for help:

- a Walk-in Centre (ACT)
- your nearest hospital Emergency Department if it is an emergency
- your GP
- Central Health Intake on 02 5124 4215

ALERT: If your fingers or toes get very pale or start to turn dark/purple, go to your nearest hospital Emergency Department immediately



Acknowledgement of Country

Canberra Health Services acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognises any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and contribution to the life of this region.

© Australian Capital Territory, Canberra 2024



Accessibility 📞 call (02) 5124 0000



Interpreter 📞 call 131 450

canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au/accessibility

