

Further Information

If you have any worries or concerns:

- Please call NHS111
- Contact your own GP or
- Contact the MIU department on 01752 434390

Compliments, comments & complaints

If you'd like to compliment, comment or complain about our service please contact our Customer Services Department:

Customer Services Department

Livewell Southwest
Room AF3, Local Care Centre
200 Mount Gould Road
Plymouth
PL4 7PY

Tel: 01752 435201

Email: customerservicespch@nhs.net

Contact details

The Minor Injuries Units are open every day of the year, including Bank Holidays.

Minor Injuries Unit Cumberland Centre

Damerel Close
Plymouth
PL1 4JZ

Tel: 01752 434390

Opening times: 8:30am - 9pm

Minor Injuries Unit South Hams Hospital

Plymouth Road
Kingsbridge
TQ7 1AT

Tel: 01548 852349

Opening times: 9am - 5pm

Minor Injuries Unit Tavistock Hospital

Spring Hill
Tavistock
PL19 8LD

Tel: 01822 612233

Opening times: 8am - 10pm

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Information & Advice

**Care of your
plaster cast**

Minor Injuries Unit

Cumberland Centre
South Hams Hospital
Tavistock Hospital

What is a plaster cast?

It is a gauze bandage that has been mixed with certain resins. When this is submerged in water and applied to your limb, it becomes solid.

What is the difference between a 'back slab' and a full cast?

A 'back slab' is a slab of plaster that does not completely encircle the limb and is used for injuries which have resulted in a large amount of swelling. It is secured with a bandage to accommodate the swelling.

This type of plaster is only temporary and will probably be 'completed' at your Fracture Clinic appointment.

A 'full cast' encircles the limb and does not need to be secured by a bandage. It only allows for a minimal amount of swelling.

How long does it take to dry?

A plaster cast will take 24-48 hours to dry completely although it may feel dry by the time you leave the department.

It will initially feel very heavy but less so as it dries. During this time you should take extra care to protect the cast. For example, do not rest it on a hard surface or write on it.

The plaster cast has become too tight

If this happens you may notice:

- Swelling of your fingers / toes
Numbness or pins and needles in your fingers / toes
- Pain
- White or blue discolouration of your fingers / toes and possible coldness
- Painful rubbing in any area

The first thing you should do is to raise the limb.

Arm cast: Rest cast on a pillow / cushion so that your hand is higher than your elbow.

Leg cast: Rest cast on pillow / cushion so that your foot is higher than your hip.

If the symptoms do not improve after 1–2 hours please return to us or your nearest Emergency Department (A&E).

- Do not attempt to remove the plaster yourself.
- Do rest your cast in this way to avoid unnecessary swelling.

The plaster cast has become too loose, cracked or soft

Under normal circumstances you should not be able to move the cast up, down or around your limb. It should feel comfortable. It should not be cracked at any point nor should it feel soft.

If you notice any of these things, and your Fracture Clinic is unable to see you urgently, please return to us or attend your nearest Emergency Department (A&E).

Can I get it wet?

No. You should never allow your cast to become wet as this will weaken it. You can use a plastic bag to cover up the cast when you have a bath or shower. Try using sticky tape or a rubber band to seal the bag at the top and bottom to make it watertight. Always remove the bag as soon as you can to avoid causing sweating, which could also damage the cast.

Can I walk on my plaster cast?

No because we have not applied a walking cast. The Fracture Clinic may decide this is appropriate at a later stage.

Should I exercise the affected limb?

Yes, you should exercise in order to avoid stiffness in unaffected joints. We recommend that you try the following gentle movements every couple of hours during the day.

Arm cast:

- Wiggle your fingers
- Bend and straighten your elbow joint (only if the plaster ends below the elbow)
- Very gently rotate your shoulder

Leg cast:

- Wiggle your toes
- Bend and straighten your knee (only if the plaster ends below the knee)
- Gently clench the muscles in the back of your calf and thigh to improve the blood flow.

Taking care of your plaster cast is vital for your injury to heal properly.