

## Patient information

### **Limbs in Plaster How to Take Care of Yourself and your Plaster**

#### Trauma and Orthopaedics

Plaster casts are commonly used to immobilise an injured limb. It can be made of plaster of paris or fibreglass. It is quick and easy to apply and most of the time you will be allowed home a short time after it is put on.

#### **Your plaster**

Your plaster will take about 48hrs to dry out and needs to do so naturally. It remains vulnerable to damage at this stage, so it is important that you:

- Do not put any weight or stress on it before it has dried.
- Do not rest your plaster on a hard surface e.g., the edge of a chair or table; this may cause a ridge to form. It is best to put a cushion or pillow on any hard surface; this can be protected by a plastic bag and a towel.
- Do not apply heat to your plaster with a hairdryer or sit too close to a fire.
- Try to keep your plaster uncovered for 48hrs, this includes out of the bedclothes.

#### **Looking after your plaster**

- Do not push anything down your plaster. Sharp objects such as knitting needles or pens may pierce your skin and cause a serious infection.
- Soft things such as tissues or cotton wool may harden and cause a pressure sore.
- Do not get your plaster wet, this will weaken the plaster, make the padding wet and potentially cause a skin/wound infection.

While your limb is in plaster you should keep it elevated at rest especially for the first few days. If allowed to hang down, it may become swollen causing your plaster to become too tight.

Try to rest your limb as much as possible for the first 48 hours: however, you should move all the joints that are not in plaster frequently, e.g., fingers, toes, elbows, and shoulders; this is to reduce stiffness and maintain muscle tone.

If your plaster cracks, becomes loose or soft or if you develop chaffing or soreness of the skin around the edges of your plaster return to the emergency department between 9.00 am and 4.00pm.

**If you develop the following symptoms, and they are not relieved by elevating your limb for one hour:**

- Increased pain
- Increased swelling
- pins and needles or numbness
- inability to move your fingers or toes.
- unusual colouring, for example blue or purple.

**You must return to the Emergency Department (A&E) immediately.**

### **Feedback**

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

### **Further Information**

**Royal Liverpool Hospital Plaster Room**

**Monday- Friday**

**9.00am- 5pm**

**Orthopaedic Trauma Co-ordinators**

**Monday – Friday**

**08:00-20:00hrs**

**Royal Liverpool Hospital:**

**Tel: 0151 706 2000 and ask for bleep 4611**

**Textphone Number: 18001 0151 706 2000 Bleep 4611**

**NHS 111 Service**

**Tel: 111**

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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