

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS After a CAST or SPLINT



## What is the difference between a cast and a splint?

A cast is applied circumferentially around the hand, wrist, forearm, or ankle while a splint is applied on one or two sides of the limb. Splints are usually applied immediately after an injury because they allow the limb to swell without compromising the circulation. After a few weeks, the splint is removed and a cast is applied.

## Can I get cast-splint wet and what will happen?

Do not get your cast/splint wet. If you do, come back to the clinic to get it changed. Leaving it wet may lead to skin irritation and/or an infection.

## Do you have casts that can get wet?

Yes, you can get Gortex-lined casts wet. However, you will have to pay extra to have this special cast applied in clinic. It is only provided if a patient asks.

## How long is the recovery time after a cast/splint is removed?

The wrist and digits are usually stiff after casting/splinting. Six weeks of therapy is generally recommended to regain motion after a long period of immobilization.

## Will I do physical therapy with the cast on, or after it is removed?

In severe injuries of the upper limb, immediate therapy may be needed while in a cast to prevent stiffness. In most cases, you are encouraged to move your digits frequently to prevent stiffness and are then referred to therapy after the cast/splint is removed.

## Why can't I use an Ace wrap or something more temporary?

Ace wraps don't provide the appropriate amount of rigidity required for tissue or bone healing. If rigid immobilization is not provided shortly after an injury, the soft tissue or bone may not heal appropriately.

## What do I do if my hand/arm/foot/leg swells?

To prevent swelling after an injury, elevate and ice the injury. You may place a bag of ice over the cast. With time, the cast is penetrated and the wound is cooled. Do not leave on for more than 25 minutes at a time. The limb has to be elevated above heart level in order to be effective. Moving the digits and making a fist frequently help reduce swelling.

## Should I ice the cast?

In the immediate injury period (within 72 hours), icing is effective in controlling swelling and pain. Ice may be applied over the cast during this period.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS After a CAST *or* SPLINT



## What do I do if I develop a rash or a skin condition?

Please call to schedule an appointment. The stockinet material used is hypoallergenic; however, it is important to have this looked at. If emergent or urgent, please go to your primary care doctor or the emergency room.

## How do I know if the cast is too tight?

Look for any changes in the skin color, numbness or temperature change or increased pain in the extremity. Elevate the extremity above the heart. If this does not improve within an hour or two, seek immediate medical attention to have the cast removed.

## What do I do if the cast loosens?

Do not try to remove cast on your own. Make an appointment to have a new cast applied.

## What happens if it itches?

Do not probe inside the cast with foreign objects as this could cause injury to the skin and compromise the integrity of the cast. You may take over-the-counter Benadryl.

## What is the cast made of?

Most of our casts are made of fiberglass. Plaster cast/splints may be applied in certain situations.

## What does Bi-Valve mean?

This means splitting the cast on both sides to allow for swelling. A tape, Ace wrap or Coban wrap is usually applied around the cast to maintain its integrity. This wrapping can be adjusted to allow for swelling.

## Why do I need a cast?

The cast is often used in place of surgery. It provides a relatively rigid fixation of the limb to allow a fracture or soft tissue injury to heal.