

Prevention of Pressure Ulcers under Plaster Casts, Appliances and Braces

Information for Patients and their Carers

Skin Care

When you wear a plaster cast, appliance or brace it can be difficult to look after your skin in the normal way. You may not be able to see your skin properly and care for it as usual so it is extremely important to be aware of potential problems.

Sometimes the cast or appliance can rub your skin and make it sore (rather like wearing a new pair of shoes). If this pressure on the skin is not relieved, a wound called a pressure ulcer can develop under the plaster cast, which can complicate your treatment.

What is a Pressure Ulcer?

Pressure ulcers are a type of injury that breaks down the skin and underlying tissue. In a small number of our high risk patients there is a risk of developing a pressure ulcer. The following increases the risk:

- Poor circulation
- Diabetes
- Reduced sensation or the ability to feel pain
- Problems with mobility or movement
- Older or frail adults
- Dementia
- The inability to communicate irregular skin sensation or pain
- Previous history of a pressure ulcer

Occasionally skin complications do occur. If they do then you may need an adjustment to your cast, appliance or brace to ensure that any pressure is relieved.

If you are identified to be at risk you may be requested to return to the plaster room or orthopaedic clinic for frequent skin inspections.

Your plaster cast may also be marked with a red stripe which identifies that you are in the high risk group and require frequent skin monitoring.



The information below outlines what steps you can take to reduce the risk of a pressure ulcer developing.

- Keep your arm or leg raised on a soft surface, such as a pillow, this will help any swelling to go down. Allow the heel section to float free to reduce pressure.
- The position of the limb in the plaster cast should be changed frequently.
- Ensure the top and bottom of the cast does not rub or leave red marks on your skin.
- Ensure all toes/fingers are able to move freely without rubbing.
- Regularly change your whole body position at least every two hours.
- If you are in a leg cast and turning on your side, place a pillow in-between the knees to prevent the cast rubbing on the other leg.
- Do not rest the casted leg on the heel for any length of time as this will put pressure on the heel.



You Should Seek Advice If:

- Your fingers or toes on the affected limb become swollen and the swelling does not reduce when you elevate your limb
- Your fingers or toes on the affected limb are numb, you develop pins and needles, or they start turning blue
- You are unable to move your fingers or toes on the affected limb
- Your plaster, brace or appliance becomes loose, cracks, becomes soft or starts to rub
- The plaster cast has developed a smell, feels wet or sticky
- You develop areas of localised pain or heat within the cast especially if the pain is not where your injury was

You should never try to adapt your cast or appliance yourself by pushing things down it or cutting it as this can cause more problems.

The department where the cast, appliance or brace was fitted will provide you with information about looking after yourself, your cast & your skin. Any advice should be followed carefully and shared with anyone who may be caring for you.

- Orthopaedic clinic
- Plaster room
- If you are in hospital talk to your nurse.
- If you are at home talk to your General Practitioner or Community Care Team/District Nurse.

(Adapted with permission from Harrogate & District NHS Foundation Trust)

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

Tissue Viability Service
Top Floor RMO Building
Huddersfield Royal Infirmary

Telephone: 01484 355396

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉਪਰੋਕਤ ਵਿਭਾਗ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

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برائے مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

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