

Spica Cast Care, Pediatric

A spica cast is a half-body cast. It is often placed on a child's hips, legs, thighs, and abdomen to allow bones, joints, and tendons to heal after an injury or surgery. Your child may need to wear the cast for 6–8 weeks, or for as long as told by your child's health care provider.



What are the risks?

- Skin sores.
- Skin irritation.
- Skin infection.

Supplies needed:

- Mild soap and water for spot-cleaning the cast.
- Car seat or harness to transport your child.
- Bib or towel to cover the cast during meals.
- Diapers or a bedpan.
- Clothes that will fit over the cast.

How to care for your child's cast

- Keep the cast clean and dry.
- When your child is eating, cover the cast with a bib or towel.
- If the outside of your child's cast gets dirty, spot-clean it lightly with a damp cloth. **Do not** get the cast significantly wet when you do this.
- Have your child wear light, loose clothing over the cast.
- Check the cast every day for cracks and other changes.
- **Do not** allow your child to stick anything inside the cast to scratch his or her skin. Doing that increases the risk of infection.

How to care for your child's skin

- For the first 3–4 hours after the cast is put on and every day after that, check your child's toes. Make sure:
 - Your child's toes are pinkish and warm.
 - Your child's toes are not swollen.
 - Your child can wiggle his or her toes.
 - Your child can feel your touch.
- Every day that the cast is on:
 - Make sure there is the same amount of space between the cast and the skin as there was when the cast was put on.
 - Check your child's skin in bright light. Check for reddish areas near the edges of the cast. Feel around for sores.
- You may pad the skin at the edges of the cast with moleskin or cushioned bandages.
- Check the skin around the cast every day. Tell your child's health care provider about any concerns.

- If your child's skin itches or feels hot, you may blow cool air into the cast with a hair dryer on the cold setting.
- Give your child a sponge bath daily with a damp cloth. **Do not** get the cast wet.
- **Do not** use any powders, lotions, or oils on the skin near the cast.

How to move and position your child

- Your child should not stand or walk in the cast unless your child's health care provider says it is okay.
- You may use a reclining wheelchair to move your child. Wheelchairs are available at hospital or medical supply stores.
- Pick up your child by supporting the cast, the leg area, and the upper body.
 - When picking up your child, put one arm under the bottom of the cast and your other arm under the child's opposite arm.
 - **Do not** use the abduction bar to help you carry or lift your child.
 - **Do not** pick up your child by the armpits.
- Keep your child's head and upper body raised (*elevated*) at all times.
- Change your child's position every 2–4 hours.
- You may use pillows to prop up your child in a stroller, but make sure to use the safety belt.
- You may need to use a specialized car seat or harness when your child rides in the car. Ask your child's health care provider if you need one.

How to petal a cast

Petalting a cast means lining the edges of the cast with soft, smooth, waterproof tape or moleskin to protect the skin. If your child's health care provider tells you to petal the cast, follow these steps for each edge of the cast or opening in the cast:

1. Cut 4-inch strips of tape or moleskin.
2. Stick one end of the strip under the edge of the cast onto the cotton liner.
3. Fold over the rest of the strip and stick it onto the outside of the cast.
4. Continue this process by overlapping strips to make a sealed edge.

Using the bathroom

Older children

- Your child may use a bedpan or toilet to go to the bathroom. Make sure to protect the cast when your child uses the bedpan.
- Your child should wipe and dry his or her buttocks well.

Younger children

- Use disposable diapers and one-piece garments that snap at the crotch if possible. The diapers should be small enough to tuck under the cast in both the front and back of the cast. It is okay to place the child on his or her stomach to tuck the diaper under the back of the cast.
- At night, consider using nighttime diapers or putting a sanitary pad in your child's diaper.
- You may put a larger diaper outside the small, inner diaper and over the spica cast for protective purposes.
- You may use an elastic belt to keep a diaper in place.
- Change diapers regularly to keep the cast from getting dirty.

Where to find more information

- International Hip Dysplasia Institute: [hipdysplasia.org \(https://hipdysplasia.org/spica-cast-tips/\)](https://hipdysplasia.org/spica-cast-tips/)
- Pediatric Orthopaedic Society of North America: [orthokids.org \(https://orthokids.org/treatments-surgery/spica-casts/\)](https://orthokids.org/treatments-surgery/spica-casts/)

Contact a health care provider if:

- Your child has pain that is not relieved by medicine or by elevating the head or upper body.
- Your child has persistent itchy feelings under the cast.
- Your child complains of burning or soreness under the cast.
- Your child has signs of infection, such as:
 - An unexplained fever or fussiness.
 - Skin changes near the edges of the cast, such as redness, cracking, or sores.
 - Staining on the cast or drainage coming from the cast.
 - A bad smell coming from the cast.
- An object gets stuck in the cast.
- Your child's cast seems too tight or too loose.
- Your child's cast breaks, splits, or starts to fall apart.

Get help right away if:

- Your child's toes are cold, blue, or pale.
- The color of your child's toes does not change after you gently pinch them.
- Your child's toes are numb.
- Your child's toes or lower leg are swollen and very painful.
- Your child is complaining of increasing pain in the cast area.
- Your baby continues to cry as if in pain and cannot be comforted.

Summary

- A spica cast is a half-body cast.
- It is often placed on a child's hips, legs, thighs, and abdomen to allow bones, joints, and tendons to heal after an injury or surgery.
- Your child may need to wear the cast for 6–8 weeks, or as long as told by your child's health care provider.

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

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