



HIP SPICA CAST CARE

A hip spica body cast is used to keep your child's hips and legs from moving after an injury and/or operation. The word "spica" refers to the type of bandage that holds the limb in place.

A spica cast may be used if your child has a broken bone in his/her pelvis, hip, or thigh. The pelvis is the bone that the femur (long thighbone) fits into, forming the hip joint. Your child may also have a spica cast if he/she has had surgery for hip dysplasia. Hip dysplasia is a term used when the tip of your child's femur does not fit in the pelvic bone as it should. Your child can be born with hip dysplasia or it may develop later as he/she grows.

Your child will depend on you for all his/her care while he/she is in the spica cast. It may seem overwhelming at first, but medical personnel will teach you how to care for your child. It is important to follow instructions closely. Always ask medical personnel if you have any questions about your child's injury or care.

CAST CARE

Whenever there is a cast in place, it is important to check the function of the nerves and blood vessels. Check the following 3 to 4 times a day:

- The color of the toes should be pink and warm to the touch.
- Your child should be able to feel all sides of his/her toes when touched.
- There should be little swelling of the toes.
- Your child should be able to wiggle the toes the same as before casting.

Once the cast is dry, you may "petal" the cast as instructed below to keep it clean and dry and to avoid rough edges.

1. Cut several strips of waterproof or moleskin tape to a length of about 4 inches. If your child is sensitive to latex, use Microfoam Tape instead of waterproof or moleskin tape.
2. Tuck one end of the tape under the edge of the cast and apply the tape to the cotton lining. Place the free end of the tape onto the cast's outside surface.
3. Continue to overlap the strips until a complete edge is formed.
4. Cover all edges of the cast, paying special attention to the diaper area opening.

- Check the cast daily for cracks and dents and for a change in the amount of room your child has between his/her skin and the cast.
- To control odor and soiling, use a slightly damp cloth and mild soap to remove dirt. Allow the cast to air dry. You may rub a small amount of baking soda on the outside of smelly areas. Do not put baking soda inside the cast.

SKIN CARE

- Check the skin every day. Press the skin back around all edge of the cast. Use a flashlight to give more light and carefully look for reddened areas under the cast. Feel for blisters or sores under the edges of the cast.
- Rub the skin under all edges of the cast with baby wipes 2 to 3 times each day. This will help toughen the skin. If the skin becomes cracked or very dry, contact your child's physician.
- Do not use lotions or powders on the skin. These tend to cake and will soften rather than toughen the skin.
- Do not allow the child to stick any objects (e.g, coat hangers) under the cast. This may injure the skin. Call your child's physician if your child has unbearable itching.
- You may use a hair dryer on a cool or cold setting to blow cool air under the cast edges. Make sure the dryer is cool because warm and hot settings can cause burns.

POSITIONING YOUR CHILD COMFORTABLY

- Position your child with the head/upper body elevated at all times. (Gravity will pull urine and stool away from the cast.) Prop the child on pillows or elevate the entire head of the mattress.
- Turn your child from front to back or side to side every 2 to 4 hours during the day and as often as you can during the night.
- Transport your child in the car in a lying position whenever traveling. There are special car seats and safety vests for transporting your child in the car. Talk to your child's physician about how to get one for your child.
- Beanbag chairs can be used to help position your child.
- An outdoor lounge chair may be used as a portable bed/seat to keep the child involved in family activities.

- You can transport your child in several ways:
 - Small children may fit in a stroller or a wagon using pillows and a seat belt.
 - For older children, you may rent a reclining wheelchair from a hospital or medical supply vendor.
 - A vehicle similar to a mechanic's dolly can be made. Preschool-aged children can wheel around on their stomachs using their arms to move themselves.

DIET

- To prevent constipation offer your child more fluids, fruits and vegetables, whole grain cereals and breads, and any other fiber-rich foods.
- Avoid overfeeding. Offer smaller, more frequent meals.
- It may be easier for your child to eat lying on his/her stomach while propped with a pillow under his/her chest.

ACTIVITY

- If your child must remain in bed when he/she first returns home, plan for quiet play activities. Books and crafts can be fun. Having friends visit and playing board type games can help pass the time.
- A reclining wheelchair or lawn chair can easily be moved to different parts of the house, even outside, for a change of scenery.
- Attendance at school is important to meet your child's educational needs and it helps the child emotionally. The presence of a hip spica cast should not prohibit attendance at school. Contact your child's school to ensure that suitable facilities are available. If your child must remain at home while in the cast, contact the school principal or counselor to arrange for home teaching if at all possible.

CLOTHING

- A plaster cast takes at least 48 hours to dry thoroughly; a fiberglass cast takes about 2 hours. Shirts, dresses, and skirts may be worn normally over the cast once it dries completely.
- Pants, shorts, and underwear can be adapted by splitting the side seams of the clothing and inserting Velcro strips to fasten at the sides of the cast.

USE OF BEDPANS AND DIAPERS

Using a bedpan:

- Your older child will be discharged from the hospital with a bedpan and urinal. When girls use the bedpan to urinate, a “wick” can be made using several pieces of toilet paper to guide the stream of urine into the bedpan.
- Make sure to dry the buttocks well after using the bedpan to prevent rashes. Make sure the bed sheets or pants stay dry as well.

Using diapers:

- Use disposable diapers if possible. Use a size smaller than usual and tuck the diaper between the baby’s skin and the cast, keeping the plastic backing next to the cast surface. Do not place the diaper over the cast because the urine from the diaper will absorb into the cast, which may cause odor and soften the cast.
- If using cloth diapers, fold to the size of the diaper area. Place folded diaper with double thickness over the front for a boy and over the back for a girl. Hold in place with plastic wrap tucked into the cast.
- A sanitary napkin may be inserted into the diaper to absorb more urine, especially at night. For children over one year of age, lining the diaper with adult incontinence pads is especially effective in keeping the cast dry.
- The diaper may be held in place with an elastic belt that encircles the waist and comes between the legs. One-piece T-shirts with snaps at the crotch (onesies) can also hold diapers in place.
- Check diapers every 1 to 2 hours during the waking hours and at least one time during the night.
- Change the diaper as soon as you find it wet or soiled.

CALL YOUR DOCTOR . . .

- ❖ If toes or fingers are cold to the touch or appear pale or blue.
- ❖ If your child complains of tingling and/or numbness of toes or fingers.
- ❖ If your child cannot move toes or fingers.
- ❖ If toes or fingers become very swollen.
- ❖ If your child has pain not relieved by elevation and aspirin, acetaminophen (Tylenol), or other prescribed pain medication.

- ❖ If your child experiences continuous, unexplained fussiness.
- ❖ If your child complains of rubbing or burning under the cast, a sign of a pressure sore.
- ❖ If a foul smell from the cast or staining of the cast occurs that was not present when the child went home. This is another sign of a pressure sore.
- ❖ If there is breakdown of skin under the edges of the cast.
- ❖ If something falls down into and becomes lodged in the cast.
- ❖ If the cast becomes too tight or too loose.
- ❖ If the cast breaks, cracks, or becomes soft.

If you have any questions, please contact Rehabilitative Services at 595-3076.

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