



Care of your temporary cast (backslab)

You have been given a temporary cast, called a backslab, to support an injury. It is a half cast held on with a bandage, so there is room for swelling. This sheet explains how to look after it and the warning signs to watch for.

What is it?

A backslab is a firm plaster or fibreglass shell on one side of your arm or leg, wrapped in a bandage. It keeps the injured part still while it heals and while swelling goes down. It is usually replaced by a full cast or checked again at a clinic within a few days.

Looking after yourself at home

- Keep the injured limb raised above the level of your heart as much as you can for the first 2 to 3 days.
- Move your fingers or toes often to help blood flow and reduce swelling.
- Keep the cast dry. Cover it with a plastic bag when you wash, and do not put it in water.
- Do not push anything inside the cast to scratch, and do not remove the padding.
- Do not cut or change the cast or bandage yourself.
- If you have a leg cast, do not put weight on it unless you were told you can.
- Use crutches or a sling exactly as you were shown.

Medicines

- For pain, you may take paracetamol unless your doctor told you not to. Follow the packet or your doctor's instructions.
- Ibuprofen may also help, unless you have a stomach ulcer, kidney disease, some types of asthma, or are pregnant.

Follow-up

- Go to your fracture clinic or follow-up appointment on the date you were given. This is important.
- If you have no appointment within 1 week, contact your family doctor or health centre.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- Fingers or toes that are numb, tingling, or you cannot move them
- Fingers or toes that turn pale, blue or cold
- Pain that is getting worse and is not eased by pain relief or raising the limb
- The cast feels too tight, even after raising the limb for an hour
- The cast is cracked, soft, loose or badly wet
- A bad smell, fluid leaking from the cast, or a fever



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This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.

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