Care Following Cast or Splint Removal

Your child was placed in a cast/splint following an injury or surgery. The cast/splint was removed on _____/_____/_______ (date). Your child’s doctor or nurse will provide you with specific instructions for your child’s care. Several questions that many parents ask are answered below.

Why is my child’s skin dry and smelly?

A cast does not allow the normal shedding of dead skin cells to occur. The skin that was under the cast may be dry, flaky or scaly and have a bad smell. Your child may also have red skin with small raised bumps. Wash the affected area with soap and water. Do not scrub or try to get all of the dead skin off at once. The skin underneath will be sensitive from being protected in the cast. Scrubbing the skin may make the skin bleed. It may take several days of gentle soaking of the skin in warm water to remove the dead skin that is causing an odor. Apply non-scented lotion to the affected area after washing.

Is it normal to see increased or darker hair where the cast was?

The hair on the skin under the cast or splint may be darker in color and thicker than usual. It will return to normal over time.

Why does my child have weak or smaller muscles where the cast was?

The arm or leg that was in the cast will be smaller than the other side. This is due to the muscle not being used. These muscles should return to their usual strength and size with regular use. This takes about the same amount of time that your child was in the cast/splint.

Is it normal to have stiff joints after the cast comes off?

The joints that were covered by the cast/splint may be stiff. Ask your child’s doctor or nurse which exercises your child can do at home to help decrease stiffness.

Limping or Leg Turned Out to the Side:

- After a leg injury, your child may have a funny walk because of weak muscles and stiff joints. Your child may walk with a limp or with his injured leg turned out to the side. Limping may occur for several months after the cast is removed while your child’s muscles become stronger.

- After a femur fracture or hip surgery, one leg may be slightly shorter than the other. Your child’s doctor will monitor any difference in your child’s leg lengths.

Does my child need physical or occupational therapy?

Children usually regain their own strength and flexibility by doing everyday activities and playing. Your child’s doctor will follow your child’s progress.
Restrictions/Limitations:

Your child has the following restrictions until his arm/leg is fully healed:

[ ] Crutches
[ ] No Physical Education
[ ] Wheelchair
[ ] Full Activity (No Restrictions)
[ ] Other: _______________________________________________________

Special Instructions:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Call the Orthopaedic Clinic at (816) 234-3075 or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line after hours at (816) 234-3188 if:

- There are skin sores after cast/splint removal.
- Your child’s arm or leg is numb or has a tingling/burning sensation.
- Your child does not want to use his arm or leg.
- You have questions or concerns about your child’s care.