

Spoedeisende Hulp

Guidelines for treatment with a plaster cast

Contactgegevens Alrijne Ziekenhuis

Alrijne Ziekenhuis Leiden
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2334 CK Leiden
071 517 8178

Alrijne Ziekenhuis Leiderdorp
Simon Smitweg 1
2353 GA Leiderdorp
071 582 8282

Alrijne Ziekenhuis Alphen aan den Rijn
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2401 WC Alphen aan den Rijn
0172 467 467

You have received a plaster cast at the Accident and Emergency Department (A&E). This brochure has information on how to deal with this, what you should do in the event of complaints and where you can go with questions.

Take note that your personal situation may differ from what is described here.

The plaster cast

You have a plaster cast on your arm or leg. A cast of plaster ensures that the part in the cast gets to rest and cannot move.

- In the event of a bone fracture, a plaster cast ensures that the bones remain in the correct position and can heal.
- For a damaged joint or tendon, a plaster cast ensures that it gets to rest.

Tips and advice

Solidity

The plaster is only hard after 48 hours. You must, therefore, be careful for the first two days. Rest your cast on a soft surface, not a hard one.

Plaster cast and water

Your plaster cast may not get wet. Protect the plaster cast when showering by wrapping it in a hand towel or tea towel with a plastic bag around it, seal this with tape so that it is waterproof. Keep your shower short.

Swelling

Keep your arm or leg raised to reduce the existing swelling, this is especially important in the first week.

- *Arm*
When you walk, use a sling for your arm. If you sit or lie down, keep your hand higher than your elbow or rest your arm on a pillow.
- *Leg*
Rest your leg on one or more pillows. It is important that your foot is higher than your knee and your knee higher than your hip. At night you can put a pillow under your mattress at the foot end. You should not walk too much (with your crutches) because this can increase swelling.

Itching and skin damage

If you suffer from itching, you can combat this by carefully blow-drying the space between the skin and the plaster cast (set the blower to cold or lukewarm; watch out for burning!). An anti-itch spray for plaster casts is also available.

Never use an object such as a knitting needle or pen to scratch. This can cause serious skin damage and infection.

Be careful with small objects that can get caught between the plaster cast and the skin. These can cause skin damage under the plaster cast. If an object gets between the plaster cast and the skin, contact the plaster room.

Exercises

It is important that you do exercises to stimulate blood circulation, to keep the fingers or toes *not* encased flexible and to maintain muscle strength as much as possible. Try the following exercises several times a day and at least five times in a row.

Arm/hand exercises

- Make a firm fist for three seconds, then stretch the fingers for three seconds.
- Tap your thumb with your fingertips one by one.
- Rotate your shoulders: stand in a slightly bent forward position and make a movement as if you are grinding coffee the old-fashioned way. If your elbow is not encased: stretch and bend the elbow. You must not rotate your forearm.

Leg exercises

- Pull your toes toward you (towards your nose) for three seconds, then push them away for three seconds.
- While seated, lift your stretched leg for three seconds.
- If your knee is not encased: bend and straighten the knee.

Elbow crutches

You may not burden a plaster cast. This is not good for the fracture, and it can break the plaster cast. If you have a plaster cast on your leg, you cannot and may not walk or stand without the use of crutches.

Measures against thrombosis

When there are no objections on medical grounds, patients over 16 years of age with a plaster cast on their leg are often prescribed blood-thinning drugs to prevent thrombosis.

When should you contact us?

Contact us by phone in (one of) the following situations:

- If, despite keeping your leg or arm raised, your fingers or toes tingle, swell, or remain dark in colour after 30 minutes of keeping it raised;
- If you can hardly move your fingers or toes;
- If the plaster cast causes pain or pinches (pain at the site of the fracture is usually not a problem);
- If the pain continues despite the use of pain medication;
- If your plaster has become wet and weak.

Finally

Remember to bring a valid ID (passport, ID, driver's license) and your health insurance card with you every time you visit the hospital. If your details change (insurance, doctor, etc.), please report this to the patient registration (Patiëntenregistratie) on the ground floor in the hall.

Questions

If you have any questions and/or comments regarding the contents of this brochure, please ask the plaster cast employees in the plaster room or the doctor at the Surgery Outpatient Clinic.

If you find that certain information is missing or unclear in this brochure, we would like to hear from you.

Telephone numbers

The Alrijne Hospital Leiderdorp Plaster Room is on route number 87 and can be reached by phone from Monday to Friday between 08.30 - 12.00 and 13.30 - 15.30 on +31 (0) 71 582 8045.

The Alrijne Hospital's general telephone number is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week:
Alrijne Hospital, general number: +31 (0) 71 582 8282

Outside the opening hours of the outpatient clinic and during the weekend, you can call the Accident and Emergency Department (A&E) on +31 (0) 71 582 8905.