

Short arm cast care and exercises



Your cast

Your arm has been injured and you have to be in a cast for a period a time to allow the injury to heal.

You should:

- Keep your cast clean and dry.

When showering:

- ✓ Wrap a towel around the cast to absorb any water that may leak in.
- ✓ Place a plastic bag around the cast with tape to ensure a snug fit.

Ask your insurance company if you are able to drive without affecting your insurance.

Do not:

- ✗ Insert any objects under the cast to scratch an itch. If you place objects under the cast you could get a skin wound that you lead to an infection. Instead tap on the outside of the cast over the itch.
- ✗ Place any additional padding inside the cast.
- ✗ Break off or trim the edges of the cast, or try to repair the cast.

If you are having any of the following problems with the cast go to the Emergency Department to get it adjusted:

- Rubbing on the skin or you feel burning in the cast.
- If it feels too tight.
- If it starts to become too loose, cracks or breaks.
- If you notice any unusual smell from the cast (some odour is normal).

Swelling

After any injury or surgery on the arm the hand will swell. To limit swelling you should:

- ✓ Keep the hand elevated by keeping it in a sling or on some pillows, where the hand is higher than the elbow.
- ✓ Exercise any free fingers for 5 minutes every hour to help maintain circulation

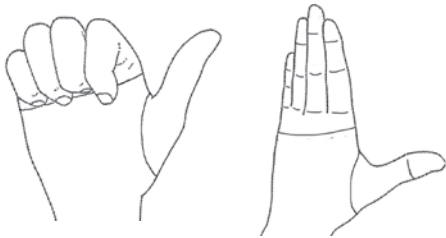
If the swelling is not improving, or you feel numbness and tingling that is not relieved after 15 minutes of elevation and exercise, go to the Emergency Department and get the cast changed.



Exercises

When you have a cast on your arm, your joints become stiff and the muscles become tight and weak. To help keep all the other joints around the cast moving, do the following exercises 3 times a day. It is normal to feel some stretching or pressure and even some mild pains during the exercise. These should ease off with stopping the movement.

If you are feeling strong pain with any of the exercises, stop doing that exercise. Check with your physiotherapist or orthopaedic doctor before starting again.



Move your fingers up and down for 60 seconds.

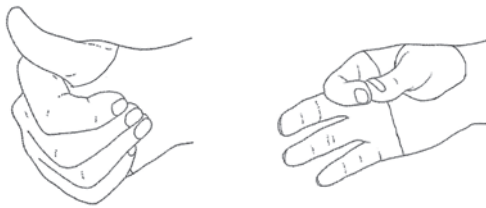


If you feel they are very stiff you can use your other hand to move the fingers backward and forward, as pictured.



Straighten the fingers and then push them apart, as in the picture.

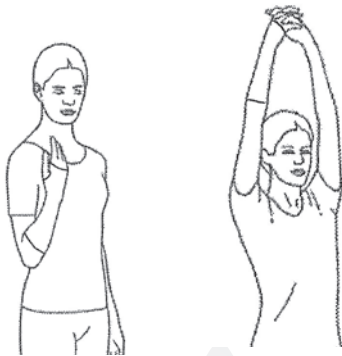
Do this 10 times.



Lift the thumb to give a "thumbs up".

Then move it down to make an "O" (as pictured).

Do this 10 times.



Take your arm out of the sling to move your elbow and shoulder.

Bend and straighten the elbow as far as you can comfortably.

Lift the arm above your head as far as comfortable, using the good arm to help if needed.

Do this 10 times.

For any questions contact Physiotherapy Departments on the following phone numbers:

Gosford 4320 3314

Wyang 4394 8217

Woy Woy 4344 8446

Long Jetty 4336 7752

This brochure contains general information for patients being treated at Central Coast Local Health District. It is not a substitute for more detailed information from the Orthopaedic and Physiotherapy Department (OPD). If any exercise causes more than mild discomfort, stop and seek advice from the OPD.