



## SPICA CAST CARE

A **SPICA cast** is applied after different types of leg or hip surgeries, tendon releases or after a broken bone. Although the cast may seem bulky and awkward, it serves a very specific purpose: to prevent the hip(s) or broken bone from moving, and to maintain the corrected position. Proper cast care provides for the general welfare of your child as well as the prevention of sores caused by rubbing and pressure of the cast against the skin. Close observation is needed to check for cast tightness, swelling or changes due to the normal growth process.



### KEEP THE CAST CLEAN AND DRY!

Cast care and skin care are closely linked. If urine or bowel movements remain in contact with your child's skin (such as under a wet or soiled diaper or beneath the edges of the cast), diaper rash and skin breakdown are likely.

- Use adult incontinence pads in the genital area. This also works for the abdominal area if the child perspires. (Brand names Dignity Pads, Super Tranquility Pads, Serenity Pads and Poise Pads by Depend)
- Wash the baby's genitalia area after every diaper change. Keeping the baby clean and dry is the best defense against diaper rash. Place a pad across the diaper area, tucking it under the front and back edges of the cast. Then diaper the child as usual. Remember, no cast opening or child's surgery is the same. **Experiment with various pads, newborn preemie diapers, folded cloth diapers and incontinence pads until you find the right one for your child.**
- Avoid any fruit juices or foods which may cause loose stools or diarrhea. **DO NOT** introduce new foods to the baby while in the cast. We want the child to have a daily formed bowel movement.
- Cover the cast with a towel, large t-shirt, or bib when feeding the child.
- Decrease amount of fluids in the evening before bedtime.

Your child should have a water-proof lining called Gortex, under the cast material. This waterproof lining can be wiped off.

### REMEMBER:

A cast that feels dry on the outside is not necessarily dry on the inside.

During the night, the pad/diaper should be checked with each different position and changed if necessary.

*Positioning the child on pillows so that the head and shoulders are higher than the buttocks will help the keep the cast dry. To protect the pillow, a disposable diaper may be used inside the pillowcase.*

### USING THE BEDPAN:

Elevate your child's head and shoulders with pillows when he/she is placed on the bedpan. This will help prevent urine from running backward and inside the cast. A gauze or cloth pad or a small folded towel placed on the back rim of the bedpan will absorb any moisture and help keep the cast dry. The pad is removed with the bedpan. If your child is a girl, you can also put a wick down the front to help direct the urinary stream into the bedpan.

### DRYING THE CAST:

If the cast becomes damp, expose it to the air during the child's naptime to dry it. Remove the child's diaper, leaving an incontinence pad in place under the buttocks. A hair dryer may also be used to dry the cast. The hair dryer should be on a warm or cool setting (**NOT HOT**) for 15 or 30 minutes and held 10 to 12 inches away from the area being dried. It should not come in contact with the skin.

**BATHING:**

Give your child a sponge bath daily. Use a damp cloth to reach under the cast edges to remove food particles, and the like. Do not use lotions, powders, or oils under the cast or around the edges. Powders have a tendency to “cake” and lotions and oils will soften the skin, making it easier for the skin to breakdown.

**CLEANING THE CAST:**

If the cast becomes soiled from stool, use a damp cloth and a small amount of cleanser to clean it, or apply toothpaste with a small brush and wipe it off. The latter may also help to remove any odor.

**SKIN:**

Check carefully beneath the cast edges every morning and evening for skin irritation, redness, blistering, open or draining areas or pressure spots. A flashlight may be helpful.

Observe the cast for cracks, dents, softening, increasing tightness or looseness, or drainage on the cast. **Do not** permit your child to poke crayons, small toys, or other small objects beneath the cast edges as this may cause pressure areas or skin breakdown.

**POSITIONING AND TURNING:**

The child in a hip SPICA cast must be positioned and turned regularly to prevent skin problems and to provide maximum comfort. Position the child with the head and upper body elevated at all times. This allows for better positioning of the hips down in the cast and allows gravity to pull urine/stool away from the cast. Turn your child from side to side, on his/her back or on his/her stomach. Make sure that the cast is not too tight at the waist or chest. Heels should be free of pressure when your child is on his/her back. A pillow placed under the legs or ankles can help prevent heel pressure. Protect the toes from touching the mattress when your child is on his/her stomach by placing a pillow or rolled towel beneath the ankles. In some instances, a bar is placed between the legs of the cast. The purpose of the bar is to stabilize the legs. **DO NOT** use the crossbar to turn your child, as it may break off. When turning your child, encourage him/her to keep arms extended above his head.

**TRANSPORTING:**

A child must be transported in a vehicle using appropriate safety seats, belts or harnesses. If he/she does not fit into a regular car seat, a safety seat to accommodate the cast can be provided. At home the child may be out of bed in a stroller/wagon if the cast allows or your physician may give you a prescription for a reclining wheelchair.

- A wagon with removable sides can be used to transport a child around the house.
- Travel with several extra pillows to aid in positioning the child in restaurants and other places.
- Position the child in a Lazy Boy recliner.
- Beanbag chairs are comfortable and work well for propping children for activities.

**PHONE NUMBERS TO CALL IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS:**

For nursing questions about your child’s care you may call 434 924-5861 for Dr. Abel or 434 982-4000 for Dr. Romness.

If you need to make an appointment or talk to your doctor you may call the Pediatric Orthopaedic Office Monday-Friday 8:00 to 4:30 p.m. at 434 982-4215 or 434 982-4214