

Serial Casting

Information for parents and carers



What is this leaflet about?

This leaflet has been designed to provide parents and carers with information to support your child/young person while they are having serial casting.

What is serial casting?

Your child/young person has been assessed by their physiotherapist as having tightness in their calf muscles and agreement has been received for them to undergo serial casting.

Serial casting is where a cast is applied from below the knee down to the toes for between 3 to 6 weeks.

The purpose of serial casting is to gradually stretch out the calf muscle in order to help your child/young person to walk more easily and improve their balance.

The casts must therefore be changed at regular intervals (usually weekly or fortnightly) gradually increasing the stretch on the calf each time.

What will happen at the appointment for serial casting?

Your physiotherapist will have arranged several appointments for serial casting in advance. It is important that you attend all these pre-arranged appointments so that the casts can be changed at regular intervals.

The appointments can take up to an hour and will usually involve your child/young person lying still on their tummy. If they have any favourite books or toys or music which will keep them still and calm, please bring them along.

Your child/young person should wear baggy/stretchy trousers, shorts or a skirt as the casts can be bulky and it can sometimes be difficult to pull clothes over them.

At first your child/young person may find it difficult to walk in the casts but they will quickly get used to them and should be walking around within 24 hours. They will be provided with removable 'plaster boots'.

Your physiotherapist may ask you to work on different exercises with your child/young person to help improve their walking.

What additional care is required while my child is wearing casts?

Check the circulation

Check your child/young person's circulation and sensation every day (morning and night) in case the casts are too tight. Your physiotherapist will show you how to do this as follows:

- Gently touch your child/young person's toes to ensure that they can feel them.
- Press gently down on your child/young person's toenail until the colour blanches (goes white) then ensure that the colour returns to pink when you release the pressure.

If you have any concerns about your child/young person's circulation or sensation please contact your physiotherapist as soon as possible. If they are not available, please remove the casts at home straight away (see below) or take them to Accident and Emergency (A&E) at the Royal Hospital for Children and Young People (RHCYP).

Avoid getting the casts wet

The casts must be kept dry at all times. When washing, cover the casts in polythene bags sealed with tape at the top. Where possible avoid going out in the rain. If the casts do get wet, they may need to be changed - contact your physiotherapist but remove the casts if you are very concerned (see below).

Putting things down the casts

Do not allow your child/young person to push anything down the casts, even if they have an itch. If something gets stuck down the cast contact the physiotherapist or remove the cast at home (see below).

Exercises

If your physiotherapist has taught you exercises to do at home, try to do them every day as these will give your child/young person a better result.

What should I do if I have any concerns while my child/young person is in casts?

If you have any concerns while your child/young person is in serial casts, please contact your physiotherapist as soon as possible. If it is the weekend or if you cannot contact your physiotherapist, and you think the casts are causing harm, then please remove them straight away at home (see below) or take them to RHCYP A&E.

If my child complains of pain

If the pain is a general ache in the calf muscle due to the stretch, "over the counter" paediatric pain relief medication can be given using the recommended dose (your pharmacist can advise if necessary).

However, if your child/young person complains of pain at a specific point this might indicate an area of pressure from the plaster. Sometimes you might feel a "hot spot" through the cast, over the area they say is sore. In either case you should contact the physiotherapist as soon as possible. If this occurs at the weekend or if the physiotherapist is not available, remove the cast at home (see below).

If there is a smell coming from the casts

If the cast has become wet, it might smell around the toe area. If this is causing concern, please contact your physiotherapist to discuss if it would be possible to change the cast earlier than planned.

However, if there is a strong smell or staining through an area of the cast, this could be due to a sore developing. If you notice either of these signs, **contact your physiotherapist as soon as possible**. If the physiotherapist is not available, remove the cast at home (see below) and seek medical attention if required.

How do I remove the casts at home?

The soft cast is designed to be taken off by unwinding it.

- Begin by unwinding the top layer from the toes right up to the knee
- Next pull off the hard back-slab at the back of your child/young person's leg (this is usually coloured) – this often requires a strong pull. The back slab should come away in one piece
- Next unwind the under layer of soft cast, again starting at the toes
- Slide off the stockinette underneath and remove any padding
- Your child/young person should wear their splint (if they have one) until a new cast is applied.

If you have difficulty removing the soft cast and you cannot get in touch with your physiotherapist, please take your child to RHCYP A&E where the casts can be removed. Your physiotherapist will have given you a letter for A&E in case this happens. Please contact your physiotherapist as soon as possible to let them know that the cast has been removed and they will arrange for a new cast to be applied if required.

Your physiotherapist's name: _____

Contact telephone number: _____

Alternate contact information

Edinburgh

Physiotherapy Department
Royal Hospital for Children and Young People
50 Little France Crescent
Edinburgh
EH16 4TJ

Tel. **0131 312 1079**

East Lothian and Midlothian

Paediatric Physiotherapy
Musselburgh Primary Care Centre
Inveresk Road
Musselburgh
EH21 7BP

Tel. **0131 446 4144**

