



Caring for your child in a Hip Spica

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This leaflet will provide you with information about caring for your child in a Hip Spica.

Please remember these are guidelines and you should follow the medical advice provided by your medical and therapy team.

What is a Hip Spica?

A Hip Spica cast is used to reduce movement in the hips or upper legs to help a bone to heal or to bring it into alignment (in the case of developmental dysplasia of the hip or DDH).

It is often used after some types of hip or leg surgery.



Cast care

- Do not let your child walk or stand in the cast.
Rolling or commando crawling is fine.
- Keep the cast clean and dry and never submerge in water.
- Check the cast daily for cracks and/or softness.
If the child is able to move their joints the cast requires repair.
- Check your child's circulation 5 times per day. Press a toenail on a toe of each foot until you see the nail bed turn white. Let it go. The normal (pink) should come back in 2 seconds
- Also check for coolness, swelling, numbness or pins and needles in the legs or feet. If you notice/or your child complains of any of these things try;
 - Having your child wiggle their toes and elevating your child's feet up
 - Changing your child's position
 - Contacting your doctor if these problems continue.

Transfers

1. Support your child's whole body when lifting them. You will need to lift both under your child's arms and under their cast.



2. For older children, you may need to lift the child using two people. Remember to keep your back straight when lifting and hold the child close to your body.



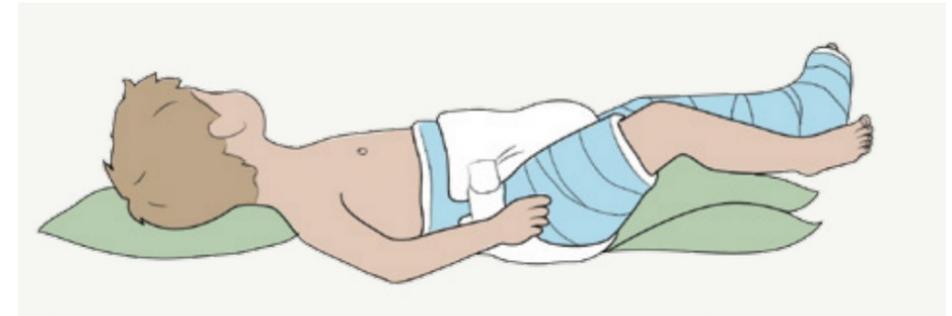
* Your child will feel heavier with a cast on! Practice these lifts during the hospital stay.

Positioning

Regular positioning will allow for maximum comfort. Your child must be positioned properly and turned regularly to prevent pressure sores. A pressure sore usually starts as a red area that does not go away. If the pressure or rubbing on your child's skin is not relieved it can cause the skin to break down. Support your child's arms, legs, and head with pillows and rolled up towels to help to prevent pressure sores.

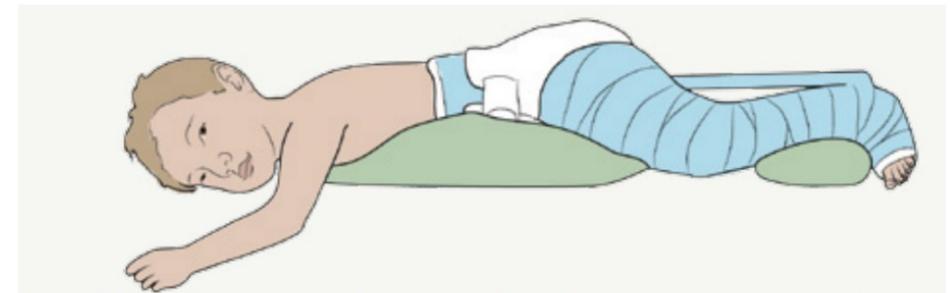
Back

Position pillows under the head, neck and legs. The heels should be free of pressure



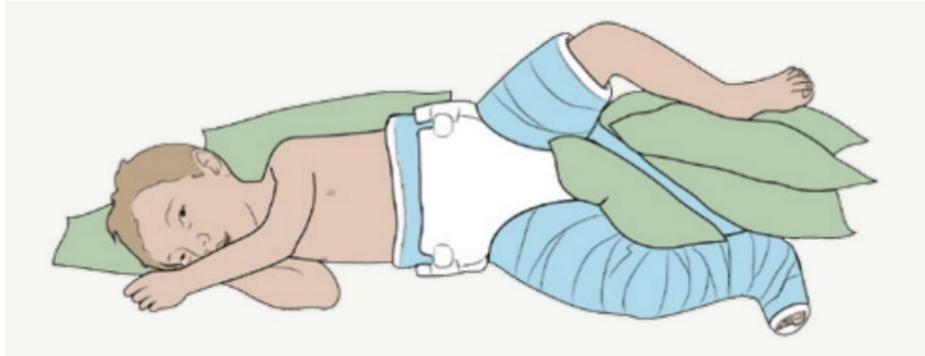
Stomach

Place pillows under the stomach and make sure the toes are not touching the mattress by placing a pillow or rolled towel beneath the ankle of the cast.



Side

Place a pillow under the head, one behind the back to prevent rolling, and one between the legs to support the cast.



- You will need to move your child regularly to stop skin problems and pressure sores.
- Move your child every 2 hours during the day and every 2 – 4 hours at nighttime.
- When you have moved your child, always check that the edges of the cast are not pressing firmly on the skin.

Toileting

- Check the diaper every 2 hours during the day and every 3-4 hours at night.
- Change the diaper as soon as it is wet and/or dirty. This will help to prevent skin irritation and getting your child's cast dirty.
- Use disposable diapers only and position your child comfortably during diaper changes
- You can use a sanitary pad or waterproof tape inside of the cast (to cover both front and back).



You will need two diapers, a smaller one and a large one. Place the smaller diaper inside the cast and tuck the edges under the cast.



Place the larger diaper over the cast.

Older children

- Children who are older can use a bedpan or urine bottle (you can purchase these from the pharmacy).
- They can also be lifted onto the toilet.
- If your child is sitting on the toilet, make sure they are sitting upright and are safe. You will need to stay with them for support.
- It is helpful to place a washer or flannel between the skin and the cast to prevent the cast from getting dirty or wet.

Bathing

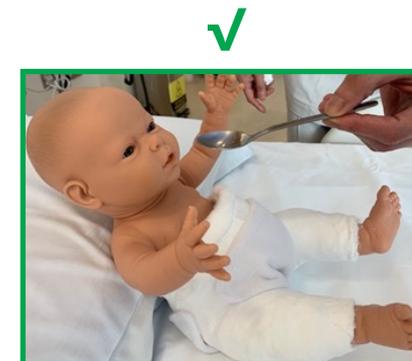
- Do NOT wet the cast
- Sponge bath your child using a bowl of water and a washer.
- Put a towel over the cast and around the edges of the cast to prevent any water dripping down.
- Your child's head can be rested on the edge of the bath or basin and a jug used to rinse the hair. This is easier with two people.
- Do not use lotions or powder on the child's skin as it can irritate the skin underneath the cast.

Dressing and Clothing

- Your child may need larger clothing than usual to fit over the hip spica cast.
- Ensure the clothing is not tight fitting. Provide clothing such as thobes, big T-shirts, loose dresses and boxer shorts.

Feeding your child

- Breastfeeding babies can continue. You may need to try different positions to find one that is comfortable for both of you.
- Children may need several smaller meals because the cast sits around the stomach.
- Tuck a bib, napkin or towel into the cast during meals to prevent food from falling into the cast.
- Do not feed your child whilst they are flat on their back.
- Always feed your child in an upright, sitting position.



Playing and Entertainment

- Keeping your child busy and distracted is important, but remember that your child should never stand or walk when wearing the cast.
- Continue to engage them in tummy time 3 or more times per day.
- Keep a variety of toys within their reach.
- Keep your child involved in their usual routines where possible.

Transport

- Children in a hip spica cast must be properly restrained while riding in a car.
- Babies typically fit in their car seat.
- The seat belt must remain in contact with your child's body in order to properly secure them.
- Use pillows, cushions or blankets to support the cast and make your child more comfortable.

Mobility

- Younger children are likely to fit into their stroller, supported with additional blankets and cushions.
- Larger children may benefit from a wheelchair with elevating leg rests.
- Speak to your Occupational Therapist for advice on the most appropriate mobility device.
- Alternatively, larger pharmacies, supermarkets or equipment stores have suitable mobility aids for the period of recovery.

Living in a hot climate

It is important to try and keep your child cool:

- Use air-conditioning or placing your child under/near a fan.
- Reduce your child's clothing and use cotton fabric.
- Sponge your child regularly on hot days with a cool, damp washer.

Contact your doctor, if your child:

If your child:

- Complains about an area that is hurting or burning.
- Has red skin, blisters, sores, cracks or tightness of the cast.
- Is unusually distressed and cannot be calmed.
- Has vomiting and develops a temperature.
- Has increased swelling, changes in skin color or the normal color is taking longer than usual (2-3 seconds) to return to the toenail once pressed.
- Has put anything underneath the cast (including food, toys or other objects).
- Has any unusual smells coming from the cast.

Key points to remember:

- Change your child's nappy as soon as it is soiled or wet.
- The hip spica should never be wet as they are not waterproof.
- If you notice any bad smells coming from under the plaster, contact your doctor or the treating outpatient team. Or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.
- Check around your child's plaster every day for any signs of rubbing, changes to skin color or swelling.
- Continue with your normal daily routines and activities. Discuss any challenges or adaptations needed to continue with these activities with your Occupational Therapist.
- Change your child's position regularly to prevent pressure areas.

Image sources: Montreal Children's Hospital – McGill University Health Centre and Occupational Therapy Department. Townsville University Hospital.

Sidra Medicine cares about your health. The information in this leaflet should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and the advice of your doctor. Ask your healthcare provider about this information if you have questions. You can find us on www.sidra.org

SIDRA MEDICINE
PO.BOX 26999, DOHA, QATAR
TEL: + 974 4003 3333
WWW.SIDRA.ORG