

Emergency Care Department

Guidelines for plaster cast treatment

Contactgegevens Alrijne Ziekenhuis

Alrijne Ziekenhuis Leiden
Houtlaan 55
2334 CK Leiden
071 517 8178

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

Alrijne Ziekenhuis Alphen aan den Rijn
Meteoorlaan 4
2402 WC Alphen aan den Rijn
0172 467 467

You have been fitted with a plaster cast at the Emergency Care department. This leaflet provides information about how to handle the cast and what you should do in the event of any problems or questions.

It is important to note that this leaflet contains general information; your personal situation may differ from the one described.

The plaster cast

Your arm or leg has been placed in a plaster cast. A plaster cast ensures that the part of your body in the cast is rested and can no longer move.

- When broken bones are involved, a plaster cast ensures that the bones remain in the right position and are able to heal.
- In the case of a damaged joint or damaged tendon, a plaster cast ensures that these are rested.

Tips and advice

Firmness

The plaster will harden completely only after 48 hours have elapsed. You must therefore be careful with it for the first two days. Do not let the plaster rest on any hard edges. Choose soft surfaces instead.

Plaster and water

Plaster must not get wet. Protect the plaster cast when showering by wrapping it in a towel or tea towel which you then cover with a plastic bag. Use plasters to seal the bag to your skin in order to make it watertight. Keep your showering time to a minimum.

Swelling

It is important that you elevate the arm or leg in plaster in order to ensure that any existing swelling decreases, particularly in the first week.

- **Arm**

When walking around, keep the arm in plaster in a sling.

When sitting or lying down, keep your hand above your elbow or rest the arm on a cushion.

- **Leg**

Rest the leg on one or more cushions. It is important that the foot is raised above the knee and that the knee is raised above the hip. At night, you can put a cushion underneath the foot end of your mattress. You are advised not to walk around too much (on crutches) because this will mean that your leg will be hanging downwards and the swelling will increase.

Itching and skin damage

If you suffer from itching, you can counter this by carefully directing a hairdryer at the area between the skin and the plaster cast (use a cold or lukewarm setting; be careful not to burn yourself!). An anti-itch spray for plaster casts is also available.

Never use objects such as knitting needles or pens to scratch the itch. This can result in serious skin damage and infections.

Be careful with small objects that may end up between the plaster and the skin. These may cause skin damage underneath the plaster. If an object ends up between the plaster and the skin, contact the plaster room.

Exercises

It is important that you do exercises to stimulate your circulation, to keep the fingers or toes that are not in plaster supple and to maintain as much muscle strength as possible. Try to do the following exercises a few times a day in sets of at least five.

Arm/hand exercises

- Make a firm fist for the count of three, then stretch the fingers out for the count of three.
- Touch the thumb with each of the fingertips in turn.
- Make circles with your shoulder: stand in a slightly bent-over position and move as if you were grinding coffee in an old-fashioned way.
- If the elbow is not in plaster: stretch and bend the elbow. Do not twist your forearm.

Leg exercises

- Bend your toes towards you (towards your nose) for the count of three, then push them back away from you for the count of three.
- When sitting, raise your extended leg for the count of three.
- If the knee is not in plaster: bend and stretch the knee.

Elbow crutches

You must not put any strain on a plaster cast. This would not be good for the broken bones and may also result in the plaster cast breaking. If one of your legs is in plaster, you must not attempt to walk or stand without the use of crutches.

Measures against thrombosis

If there are no objections on medical grounds, patients over the age of 16 who have a plaster cast on their leg are often prescribed blood-thinning medication in order to prevent thrombosis.

When you need to contact us

If any of the following situations arise, please call us:

- If, despite keeping your leg or arm elevated, your fingers or toes start tingling, become swollen or turn a dark colour, and remain that way after elevating the arm or leg for 30 minutes. If you are unable to or barely able to move your fingers or toes.
- If the plaster cast causes pain or pinches (pain at the site of the break is not usually a cause for concern).
- If you suffer continued pain despite the use of pain medication.
- If your plaster has become wet and soft.

Finally

Each time you visit the hospital, make sure you bring a valid form of identification (passport, ID card, driving licence) and your healthcare insurance card with you.

If your details (insurance, GP, etc.) have changed, please report this to Patient Registration in the hall on the ground floor.

Questions

If you have any questions and/or comments as a result of reading this leaflet, please do not hesitate to ask the plaster cast specialists in the plaster room or the doctor at the Surgery outpatient clinic.

If you think that specific information is missing from this leaflet or that some of the information is unclear, we would be happy to hear from you.

The Surgery outpatient clinic at Alrijne Hospital in Leiden can be found by following route number 40 and can be reached by calling +31(0)71 582 8045 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. from Monday to Friday.

The Surgery outpatient clinic at Alrijne Hospital in Leiderdorp can be found by following route number 85 and can be reached by calling +31(0)71 582 8045 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. from Monday to Friday.

The Surgery outpatient clinic at Alrijne Hospital in Alphen aan den Rijn can be found by following route number 33 and can be reached by calling +31(0)172 467 045 between 8:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. and between 1.00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. from Monday to Friday.

The plaster room at Alrijne Hospital in Leiden can be found by following route number 40 and can be reached by calling +31(0)71 582 8045 between 8:15 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. from Monday to Friday.

The plaster room at Alrijne Hospital in Leiderdorp can be found by following route number 87 and can be reached by calling +31(0)71 582 8045 between 8:15 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. from Monday to Friday.

When the outpatient clinic is closed and at weekends, you can call the Emergency Care department on +31(0)71 582 8905.

About the Alrijne Healthcare Group

At our locations in Leiden, Leiderdorp, Alphen aan den Rijn, Katwijk and Sassenheim, we offer the best healthcare to every patient. And we achieve this by working together, with the involvement of patients who are in charge of their own lives, experts and committed staff, and in collaboration with GPs and other healthcare providers. For more information about the Alrijne Healthcare Group, visit:

www.alrijne.nl

You can also follow us on Twitter @alrijne and on Facebook.